Wasting time

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Wasting time

by BattyMadison

Summary

Omegaverse. At 29 years old, Will Graham knows very well that he's no longer up for those dreadful parties full of alphas and such. With his estate and his job, with almost no human contact, he can afford a quiet life with his dog and days of fishing. That is until Count Lecter proposes to buy his land, and in the face of his obvious refusal, he begins a courtship that Will doesn't know where it will lead.

Meanwhile, Hannibal Lecter, in all the glorious manipulation with which he has lived his life, has never encountered a man as annoying, disheveled, and unnatural as the omega. Seeing a new opportunity to break free from the routine and gain something in return, he doesn't hesitate to start a game in which he knows he is the winner. As long as he doesn't give in to what his bleeding heart clearly shows him, he's not in for those vicious feelings, and a weakness like love.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

There are many things that Will Graham detests. The list grows week by week, with determining variables being key to adding more elements. Social contact, for example, as in these moments.

“Mr. Stevens, you need a loan to resolve your situation,” he repeats for the fourth time, looking at the beta in front of him, small eyes and incipient baldness on his head. The man, around 40 years old, has spent at least 20 minutes pacing in his office. First, with the moral superiority that Will is already used to (that happens when you're a bachelor omega), but then with the desperation of a guy too stupid to solve his problems on his own.

“But Mr. Graham, I was told you were the best, that you could work magic.”

Will resists rolling his eyes. “I understand, but I can't perform miracles with your finances.”

Having a knack for mathematics and inheriting a business as an accountant and librarian have allowed Will to have a roof over his head. However, it's one of those jobs where he sometimes has to face his clients. He generally prefers letters, sending balances, and that sort of thing.

But of course, Donald Stevens is an incompetent who gambled away his wife's fortune and now wants to recover it without doing anything.

“I could check with the city bank; your background is good, and you have a payment history. I don't think they'll give you a hard time. If you get the money, I'll take care of clearing your debt,” he promises and waits for the gentleman to accept and leave him in peace.

Stevens wrings his hands, sweat on his face despite the cold winter. In the end, he makes a decision, straightening up and firmly shaking hands. “Very well, Mr. Graham, I hope you're right. I'll be writing to tell you how it goes.”

“I'll be paying attention, Mr. Stevens,” Will bids farewell, watching the man quickly leave the office.

He sighs, bringing a hand to his face and scratching his neck with the other. He checks the time, just 9:45 in the morning, and decides to head back into his house to see how his beloved Winston is doing, the dog he adopted two years ago and who is his only family. The fact that his office is also his home has its advantages.

At 29, Will Graham is already an old man with zero possibilities of being courted by an alpha with good (or bad) fortune. Here and in China. At least he's fortunate to have the independence and autonomy that the vast majority in his dynamic lacks, allowing him to live on his own and run his small business.

It wasn't always like this. The Duke of Yorkshire, Alan Lancaster, changed his life five years ago in America, his homeland, when he brought him to England.

He leaves food for his dog, which he prepares himself, to do his duties. He has seven clients and also oversees the estate he lives on, a sizable property he inherited from the old duke along with the business.

It's a crucial area now because Will has noticed that the railway line would benefit from crossing his property, allowing a connection between the urban area and more rural locations. He doesn't oppose it; in fact, for the past few months, he has been studying proposals from investors for the construction because he doesn't want to harm his community.

It's true that he's antisocial, gets along more badly than well with the other inhabitants and is probably ruined as an omega (as if he cared), but he also doesn't want to make things worse.

When he sees the clock after having been sorting his notes and checking his books, he decides it's time for lunch. He gets up, yawns a bit, and heads to his small kitchen.

His routine is boring but domestic: work, receive his clients, spend time with Winston, and fish, whenever he can, in the stream that runs near the boundaries of his property, at the beginning of the dark forest which is beautiful in the autumn. It's a good life, more than he could have ever imagined he would have had eight or even 15 years ago.

His small bedroom has a soft bed that fits him well, even with Winston, hidden on the second floor of his office. It also has a bathtub that, while hermit-like, boasts excellent heating that

has given him the most luxurious indulgences of all his years.

I have nothing to complain about, he thinks as he prepares for the night after taking a long bath, soaking his skin until it wrinkles. Now he snuggles under the sheets, considering that it would be good to go check on the trouts this weekend.

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Mr. Stevens is a first-class bore. Will hates having to deal with condescending people, and what's worse, when that doesn't work for them, they try to manipulate him to solve their lives.

“Without credit, I can't do anything,” Will replies again, trying to maintain his composure, hands crossed on the desk, looking at the man sitting in front of him. It's an effort not to furrow his brow (his friend Beverly, the beta who has always spoken warmly to him, says he seems to be made of salt with so much bitterness).

“The bank rejected me, Mr. Graham,” the beta repeats, shrugging his shoulders, “but I understand you could give me a loan. I'll pay you back.”

Will is emphatic when he shakes his head in denial, “I'm not a lender. In that case, I'd prefer that you consult with another accountant about your account.”

Stevens looks at him, dumbfounded, “My account, as you say, has been with the Lancaster family for generations. An American omega won't come to oust me.”

Will's lips firm in a straight line, “And I am the one who manages this business, not any Lancaster. Therefore, the final decision is mine, Mr. Stevens,” he gestures toward the door, waiting for the man to stand, “I can have your documents ready for you to transfer this Friday, so you don't need to create a scene.”

The man leaves disgruntled, a pout on his lips for being treated in this way and by an omega, as Will perceives, who dismisses it when the door creaks with the force he used to close it.

It's not the first time he has encountered cases of useless and incompetent people who gamble away their inheritances, their spouses' dowries, and spend everything on their bohemian lives. Will has zero interest in such things; his father's only good contribution was not getting him involved in social life, so Will doesn't understand the excitement and zeal that parties and debauchery bring.

He closes his eyes, imagining himself by his river, fishing rod in hand, feet in the clear water. A soft tapping at the door interrupts his daydream. He has no more appointments in the morning, only in the afternoon, so he gets up, firm steps to open it.

His eyes scrutinize the gentleman who looks at him with a peaceful smile on his face. Tall, at least ten centimeters taller than him, well-combed hair, face with a few lines, elegant cheekbones, and an intelligent gaze.

An alpha, if there ever was one.

“Can I help you?” he asks, with manners that disguise his reluctance to attend to him.

“Are you Will Graham?” he replies with a non-English accent that Will, with his limited experience in languages, recognizes as Eastern European. He nods almost imperceptibly, letting the man enter and then returning to his desk, sitting upright (it's the best way to deal with alphas).

“Can I help you?” he asks once more, looking at him intently. The man is at least a few years older, well-dressed in brown and black. Comparable to the suits that the Duke Lancaster used to wear.

“My name is Hannibal Lecter,' the alpha replies amiably, “Count Lecter XII. I arrived in England a few months ago, from Lithuania.”

Despite hating eye contact, Will meets his gaze in the midst of his confusion at the man who talks without saying anything yet.

“I have been told that you own Lancaster Estate in Townsend,” Lecter states, with a slight shrug, “It's an area I am very interested in.”

Oh, thinks Will, the trains, “Are you here for the railway service? Because I closed the bid for proposals a few weeks ago.”

Lecter looks surprised, “No, it's not that,” a small smile appears on his face, “I have no knowledge of that company. My matter is more personal. I'll be honest with you, Mr. Graham, my interest is in buying the estate and the land.”

Will opens and then closes his mouth in a cliché. This guy, Count of Lithuania, wherever that is, is crazy, “Buy? Nothing there is for sale.”

“My interest is substantial, Mr. Graham. I am willing to pay you whatever you ask.”

“There's no price you can put on it. You've caught me off guard with all this talk; I don't know who you are, I don't know how you found me, and I don't know why you want my estate.”

The Count remains silent, with an impassive face and eyes fixed on his. Finally, a slight twitch appears on his features, almost imperceptible, but Will has always been good at reading faces, “I think I started on the wrong foot. Maybe we could talk in the afternoon; I would like to invite you to dinner at my house.”

He stands up gracefully, taking a business card from his well-fitted coat. Will accepts it while still seated, his fingers touching the Count's brown gloves.

“I don't usually go out in the afternoons, Mr. Lecter. I think I'll have to decline your invitation,” he says tersely, unable to hide his annoyance with the encounter.

The man, sensitive to his bad mood and perhaps sensing that he started off on the wrong foot, nods his head, “I understand; it was a mistake to approach you this way. Forgive my insistence, and forgive me in advance,” he states, raising his gaze once more, “because you will probably see me here again.”

With a very polite farewell, the Lithuanian alpha leaves.

Will rolls his eyes and sighs deeply. How dreadful it is to have to deal with people.

Will Graham is not what Hannibal expected. Plain and simple. When he received the information that an omega was the new owner of Lancaster Estate, through whatever business dealings (not his concern), he believed his plan could be easier.

He knows all sorts of omegas, young and old, married and single. They all have certain personality traits in common and are easy to manipulate. Hannibal Lecter has had no trouble in the past, and an omega won't stop him from getting what is his by birthright.

When he heard of this Will Graham fellow, he pictured an average omega, charming and charismatic, ready to get rid of the troublesome task of managing an estate and related properties. But of course, he encountered a grumpy omega, horribly dressed, and with entrepreneurial aspirations.

The rumor is that Mr. Graham lives in eternal mourning for the old Lancaster's death and, besides taking care of the land, the tenants, and the businesses, he still handles the duke's accounts. Ridiculous.

Except for those intelligent eyes that denied the sale. A subtle gaze that never met his, always focused on some other corner of his face.

Thinking about this, he sends another dinner invitation with one of his servants. A single omega like Will Graham, unattached, will most likely refuse to see him. But he still must take the first step, and what better way than with an invitation.

He rejects it, obviously.

The next two as well. By the fourth, he decides to visit him in his office early in the morning once more.

He's met with giant blue eyes almost hidden behind small glasses, a furrowed brow, and grumpiness. Will Graham in all his glory.

“Count Lecter,” he greets him, allowing him to enter, “How can I assist you?” he asks, returning to his desk, pretending not to recognize that Hannibal is only here because he has rejected all of his invitations.

For the same reason, he gets straight to the point: “I thought it necessary to come to see you to understand to what extent I've offended you for you to deny me your company.”

Mr. Graham's lips pout with annoyance, “I don't understand your purpose; I explained my refusal to sell the estate, and I don't think we have more to discuss. I don't find you interesting.”

What an assertion, what arrogance. A small, neurotic omega can't believe he's superior to him, to his vast experience, to his intelligence.

“Strong words when you don't even know me,” he assures, without showing his indignation, “I think it would be good if we talked; I have some goals related to your businesses.”

“Then we could discuss them here, in my office and during my working hours. Not at your house,” the omega responds brusquely, looking at his eyebrows with reproach.

Faced with that and understanding that this will have to be a magnificent manipulation, Hannibal can only nod and say, “very well.”

Graham nods attentively, so he continues, “I understand that you oversee the accounts managed by Lancaster. Among these are those of my family. Decades ago, some of those lands were in his possession, and I would like to pay attention to that information. I would pay for your work, of course.”

“I would have to review the files. If I start today or tomorrow, I don't think it will take me more than a week; I have them well organized,” Graham replies, standing up and concluding the conversation as he heads for the door. What a rude, strange omega.

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Will Graham is the most unpredictable and offensive thing he has ever encountered. Any other omega of his age, too old to marry, would be desperate to ingratiate themselves with him; a count and an aristocratic gentleman of noble lineage.

But Graham barely smiles, as reserved as no one else. Inappropriate clothing fit for an old beta, disheveled hair, and eyes that don't look anyone in the face. Clearly a misfit.

As he understands it, the business he manages was left to him by the duke, an older alpha who had no other heirs. Graham, like Hannibal, is a foreigner. He arrived with Lancaster in a relationship that is rumored to be inappropriate, five years ago, and for the last three years, after the duke's death, he has been handling the accounts of several men from the estate.

The omega accountant. Ridiculous. Even worse is the fact that Hannibal had to go see the progress he assigned him twice a week, having to endure his company for his own plan.

Because, of course, one week was insufficient, he knew that when he asked for it. The Lecter family lost everything with Lancaster, and surely the duke concealed his fraud very well.

“I'm sorry,” Graham said when he noticed that the information wasn't in the notebooks, his voice more honest than Hannibal is accustomed to hearing, “the information is not in the notebooks. But I think I can find documents with data in the duke's library.”

So, one week turned into another, and so on until it reached a month. At least, he has been able to engage in conversation, not because of his charm, which had never failed him, but due to insistence. He notices that the omega is highly intelligent, with opinions on various topics that he only reveals when someone forces him, unaccustomed to socializing.

But when he speaks, his face lights up, and poetry flows from his mouth. He understands the human spirit very well, talks about some of the cases he has handled and lost, about ignorant men, about beasts.

The first time he looks into his eyes for more than a few seconds, Hannibal freezes, feeling pierced. This omega is perceptive, and beneath his simplicity, he hides tools that could take away his strengths, steal what Lancaster couldn't. And Hannibal won't be defeated by a pathetic solitary creature.

He needs to make progress in his machination soon; otherwise, he will lose the opportunity to acquire Lancaster Estate and perhaps send the annoying Mr. Graham back to his lands.

That's all.

Will doesn't understand why the Count wastes so much time visiting him; there must be some ulterior motive. It's clear that whatever documents the Duke once had about the Lecter family no longer exist; it's a job without an end.

So, why won't this annoying alpha leave him in peace?

What's worse is that, in a way, after over a month of being visited by someone who pays attention to what he has to say, Will realizes that it's not so hard to have a conversation. He struggles to look at Lecter, like everyone else, but the intensity of the Count makes him want to fix his gaze on his face, on the almost reddish-brown of his eyes.

What's clear is that Lecter is interested in his estate, wants to buy it, and perhaps is seeking the most appropriate way to achieve it.

On a new day with the count sitting in front of him, as if it were the most normal thing in the world to watch him work and as if he had nothing better to do, the situation becomes more cumbersome. Will pretends not to get distracted, copying data from one sheet to another almost mechanically, distracted by the alpha's scrutiny.

“You fascinate me deeply, Mr. Graham,” the Count breaks the silence. “May I have your permission to court you?”

What.

Of all the things he could imagine, that declaration was not one of them. Insistence on selling, even a request for friendship. But courtship? That implies more, it implies courtship, an engagement, and a wedding. It implies marriage.

No one has even asked him for a dance at a ball (he only attended some accompanied by Mr. Lancaster and never in his youth). He knows his eyes appear enormous, and his mouth opens and closes for a few seconds, his head moving in a negative sign.

“If I've given you any indication that a courtship would be welcome, I apologize,” he finally breathes, not looking at him. He feels his cheeks burn.

The alpha remains unfazed. “A chance wouldn't hurt you, Mr. Graham. These weeks, talking and seeing you work up close. I've never met anyone like you; I feel privileged.”

Will narrows his eyes. “So many compliments when your great concern has been my estate and those non-existent papers of your family.”

Lecter shrugs. “That may be the purpose for which I met you, but undoubtedly it's been your presence that has captivated me to keep visiting.”

A sigh escapes Will's lips, and he mimics the action, his shoulders slumping, and his head moving in denial once again. “I have no interest in courtship or what it entails, Mr. Lecter.”

With one last burning gaze, Lecter gets up, taking a step to the side and leaving him alone after exiting the door, closing it slowly.

He realizes that his hands are trembling, so he gets up and leans against the wall, his body ending up on the floor. Winston gets up from his nap in his small bed and comes to see him, curling up on his knees. Will closes his eyes and prays to heaven for everything to return to normal before counts and courtship requests.

Obviously, life is not so kind.

Hannibal Lecter appears again two days later, with the excuse of wanting to have a simple conversation. He doesn't mention courtship, although he acts gallant. Will mocks some of his charms, leaving him in silence.

Three days later, the count reappears. His arrogant face asking him to take care of the accounts for a piece of land near the area that belonged to his grandparents. Will wants to refuse but knows it would only make Lecter even more annoying, so he reluctantly agrees.

The count, being who he is, takes advantage and asks for courtship again. And he does the same for the following weeks.

If Will thought of himself as a somewhat unsocial person, this harassment is making it worse. Because the count brings out his meanest side. Will even made Winston urinate on a suitcase (the story is long, but when Lecter realized it, Will thought he would kill him and his beloved dog), he smudged his clothes by eating a pie that the count brought (he should have never accepted it), and on one occasion, When Lecter tried to show him a small pocket mirror with a gold frame he supposedly inherited from a Russian czar, Will lifted it against the sunlight of the window, causing the light to hit the count's almost red eyes, blinding him for a few seconds.

It seems that nothing he does is sufficient to end his persistence.

Will Graham was not raised for this; in his life, he has never been courted, and even less so by someone of such status and determination. Even less by someone he has talked to, someone who has listened to him and seems to find him interesting.

He doesn't know how to get out of this hole… and maybe not find it so bothersome.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

A visit from Beverly, and the courtship begins. Let's see how it goes!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will puts up the sign that says "CLOSED" as soon as his friend Beverly Katz enters. He wants to avoid annoying and unexpected visits from certain pretentious counts.

"And what if his interest is genuine?" Beverly asks, already comfortably seated and inspecting her nails, as if genuinely concerned about that and not the gossip that has become Will's life.

"Of course, as if I have so many virtues to interest a millionaire Lithuanian count. I forgot when I woke up," he grumbles, crossing his arms on the desk.

Beverly rolls her eyes, straightening up a bit. Her beta friend has no qualms about telling it like it is. "Come on, Will. I know you have a lot of skills, and you're adorable. Who says Count Lecter doesn't want something real?"

He frowns, annoyed with himself and the feelings that the presence of that alpha evokes in him. He shakes his head. "Don't you find it strange that he showed up out of nowhere asking about my estate, with all that talk about his family having a pseudo-relationship with the duke, and now he's asking for courtship? It's too coincidental."

Beverly takes one of his hands and looks at him sympathetically. "What if it's true? What if the count saw something in you that caught his attention? Why don't you open yourself up to the possibility that it's genuine?"

Will gazes at his hands. At some point in his adolescence, before his father drilled into his head that he wanted a son, not an omega, Will believed that if he could control his quirks and oddities, he might end up getting married and starting a family. He never thought about who might become his alpha, more inclined to dream of a happy life than of love.

Impossible, he tells himself, and it's dangerous how close the count has come to the hard shell he has built his whole life. He shakes his head again before responding. "I don't know. If I'm wrong about this, I'd lose what little pride I have left. I'm not sure I can throw myself into the river like that."

His friend squeezes his hand. "But Will, you're so brave. Look at you! I've seen you make slackers cry, you keep your own job, your estate, and this ugly town. Why would it be so

improbable that the count saw something in you he wants to shine?"

Too good to be true, he thinks, but he doesn't verbalize it because he knows his friend will pester him even more with the idea of accepting the courtship.

However, Beverly has known him since he arrived in Lancaster, introverted, even more so than he is now, with no connection other than his friendship with the duke. So she must read something on his face because she affirms, "You don't have to get married, you know. Accepting the courtship doesn't mean you have to sign the marriage papers, Will. You can always say no if you think he's lying."

His eyes widen with surprise, not really knowing what courtship entails, but he frowns again, saying, "But that would be very rude."

Beverly shrugs, once again inspecting her nails. "If you say no, there must be a reason. He probably deserves it."

It might be, he thinks.

Against Hannibal’s will, the disheveled omega hasn't released his thoughts. It's a real challenge to interest him because Will Graham is not drawn to comments about class or power; he's not interested in high society or the fine arts.

He does care about justice; he's had a discussion with him about *Emile, or On Education* , remembering the omega's flushed cheeks while arguing in defense of Rousseau and his children's abandonment. His memory also reflects the shade of his eyes, which appear green under certain light.

It's a shame that Will doesn't know how to showcase the hidden beauty he possesses, that he doesn't groom his curls as he should, that he wears those low-class beta suits, looking more like a funeral worker. That he neglects his own face and wears a small beard. Also, that he smiles so rarely, always serious, with a furrowed brow as if the weight of the world rests on his thin shoulders. And, even worse, that he uses those suppressor oils that make him smell like a bland beta.

He has to make an effort to get on his good side, to make him like him.

It would be much easier to force him to sell the estate; a low-class omega with no connections like him couldn't possibly fight to keep the property. That solution would be so simple, so attainable, and so perpetually boring.

Why choose a path without excitement when he can play with the only omega who, in his 43 years, has been arrogant enough to reject him?

What started as an easy amusement, acquiring Townsend and getting rid of Will Graham, has now become a goal: to conquer him, marry him, and send him back to America, abandoned and disillusioned by the complexities of their dynamic.

That's why he dedicates so much time to thinking about the omega, to remembering the features of his delicate face, the eloquence of his words and his silences. That's why he not only visits him a few days a week but also seeks him out in the morning and in the evening because it's not his fault that Will lives in the same place where he works.

He has even tried to befriend the beast accompanying him, offering him expensive sausages to gain the dog's trust.

That's why he walks once more to the small office, thinking about the range of responses the omega might have, wondering if he can make him smile today.

The shrill and annoying voice of a man is heard from outside the door when he's a few inches away. From what he can see through the poorly closed curtains, it's the same who was with Will on the day he first met him: a small, insignificant, and uninspiring fellow.

He approaches, trying to catch a glimpse of the scene. Will is still sitting in his chair, his face annoyed and lips pursed, while the beta, with his back to the door, is furiously pounding the desk. It's only when he hears him seriously insult the omega that he forces his way in.

Both men stare at him, Will with wide eyes, surprise written on his face, while the beta, after a brief pause, continues his outburst, "Do you think you can come and do as you please?" He fumes with anger, ignoring Hannibal, who remains at the door. "The Duke didn't even consider marrying you, so what honor can you speak of?"

Will stands up like a wild animal, his cheeks flushed with indignation, his entire body indicating that his greatest desire is to punch this arrogant man. "Get out of here now, Mr. Stevens. I will make a report against you, and your wife will know very well what happened to her fortune." He speaks almost through gritted teeth, pointing to the door.

The man opens and closes his mouth as if he were incapable of comprehending that someone is threatening him, let alone that it's an omega intimidating him. After giving him only a quick look, he rushes out of the door.

"Mr. Graham," Hannibal begins, walking slowly toward the desk, watching Will's hands tremble, his face looking in any direction but his own. Something tightens inside him. "At this moment, my greatest wish would be that you didn't have to go through such scenes."

Will brushes off his black pants, wiping away nonexistent dust before sitting down again. Only then does he return his gaze. "Don't worry, Count Lecter, to my regret, these kinds of scenes, as you call them, are quite frequent," his lips form a pitiful smile.

"You're good at what you do," he continues, feeling honesty in his words. "I thought about intervening, actually, but I chose not to."

Will looks at him cynically with his clear eyes. "Too much effort, you thought?"

Hannibal shakes his head, sitting down. "No, of course not, but I know the strength of your resolve. Perhaps others see you as a toothless animal, but I see you as the mongoose I would want to protect my home."

The omega's face remains impassive to his impromptu words, but slowly a new smile creeps onto the corner of his lips, adding a slight blush to his cheeks. He avoids Hannibal's gaze this time not out of annoyance.

Hannibal already feels like a winner.

"Mr. Graham, Will, if you'll allow me," he continues, taking advantage of the moment and perhaps wanting to touch the pale hand in front of him, just to make the situation more romantic, "how could I not desire your company? Please let me court you."

And Will Graham watches him with something akin to anticipation in his features, in how he lowers his gaze a little when he responds. "If I were to accept, what exactly would it entail?"

"If you were to allow me, I would like to accompany you in your pastimes, visit you freely here in your office," he responds quickly, feeling his heart pound strongly, so close to his goal. "I understand that you don't have close ties that would require a chaperone, but if you're uncomfortable with us being alone, I understand."

"You've been visiting me alone for months, Mr. Lecter, I doubt anyone cares," Will murmurs dryly, observing him without revealing anything.

Hannibal shrugs, "That's true. Well, I'd also like to address you by your first name and in a few months, set the date for our wedding."

"I feel like you're in a hurry," the omega scoffs, "but I won't lie. I find you interesting, Hannibal." He smiles shyly. "I'll give you permission, but without any commitment."

It's not until after leaving the office and walking back to his mansion that he realizes he's been thinking of Will Graham without any formalities, without any "Mr." in between.

It seems he's better at this than he expected.

It's strange and complex. Being courted. Having accepted (what else could he do, he thinks, unable to avoid blushing as if he were 15 years old).

The count, no, Hannibal, gifts him some perfect feathers for his fishing hooks.

("I thought it was pertinent to find some flowers first, even if they were dandelions, as a sign of my loyalty," the alpha commented, looking at him with those intense brown eyes, "but I knew it wouldn't be a perfect gift for you.")

How could he not feel this way, as if his day begins with Hannibal's visit?

(Beverly just hugs him and asks him to please take the time to be happy.)

He finishes making sure his office is fully closed, that Winston is taking a nap, and that he himself is dressed in his best clothes, the ones the Duke gave him for special occasions – slim gray trousers and a light blue shirt with a black waistcoat. He sets out from his residence to the count's mansion. He even decided to use less of the oil he usually applies to his neck and wrists, emitting more of his scent than he's used to since his adolescence.

In his sweaty hands, he holds his own gift, nervous with the need to impress the alpha. He doesn't know when he started to fall so smoothly into this courtship and understands very well that he should continue to keep his emotional walls up, suspecting every action of the count, still incredulous that someone like Hannibal Lecter could take an interest in him.

The mansion is located outside the town he administers, at the beginning of where Townsend begins. Will thinks he should have rented a carriage, worried about arriving sweaty, but, well, he has come too far to turn back, and at least, he thinks, trying to be optimistic, he left with more time than necessary to arrive at teatime.

When he reaches the location, he can't help but stand there with his mouth open for a few seconds, and no wonder – the mansion looks like something out of a fairy tale, the kind Will used to read as a child. He imagines the number of parties and galas that have been enjoyed here, the hundreds of people who have danced and lived within these walls.

"Mr. Graham," a friendly butler opens the door and Will recognizes him as Jimmy Price from his conversations with Hannibal. The middle-aged beta welcomes him, taking his jacket and ushering him in.

Hannibal appears at that moment, coming down the main staircase, even more elegantly dressed than usual, as a count should be, and for a moment, Will thinks that maybe someone important is coming (and his nerves tighten as he realizes how handsome the alpha looks).

But the alpha just looks at him warmly as he approaches him, kissing his hand in the same way he has in recent days and making a slight motion with his face and nose, as if he were smelling him. Will, embarrassed, almost throws his gift at him, looking away.

"Oh, Will, it wasn't necessary for you to trouble yourself," Hannibal warns him, pretending not to have paused to smell him, his face happy as he opens the gift – two hooks that Will made with the received feathers. The alpha touches them and raises them to his eyes, observing them as if they were a painting and not just fishing tools.

Will clears his throat, looking at the walls, noting the aesthetics of the mansion, just as pretentious as its owner, he thinks with affection and amusement. "I imagine you have the food prepared, because I preferred to walk and used up all my strength on the journey," he says with a slight smile, following the alpha to the dining room where he pulls out his chair.

If all his social experiences were like the ones he has with the count, perhaps Will wouldn't be a recluse. But well, no one but the alpha has taken the time to court him with such

dedication. The dessert and savory dishes, all cooked by Hannibal ("I learned when I studied in Italy. Cooking is an art"), are exquisite, and before he knows it, the hour has passed until it gets dark.

"Would you have wished to do something else?" the count asks him when they have retired to the living room, both with wine glasses. Will was delighted with the place, a library full of books and an elegant fireplace; he can almost imagine himself staying up reading on the rug until dawn.

"There aren't many possibilities for those of my dynamic, Hannibal," he answers without reproach and drinks a little more, thinking about his response. "But I imagine something simple. Perhaps I would have made fishing my profession," he explains, feeling a little embarrassed by his basic choice.

Hannibal looks at him with interest. "It's something I can imagine you doing; calm and at peace. More so than you usually appear in your office."

Will emits a very un-omega-like snort. "If it were up to me, I would live at the top of a mountain, and all human contact would be through letters. I would also have at least seven dogs."

The alpha's laughter is warm, just like his gaze. "You are a rather unique creature."

Will feels his cheeks blush, as usual when in the company of the count. "And you, if you weren't, well, of the aristocracy, what would you do?"

Hannibal looks at his glass, swirling the remaining liquid. "I would still be in Italy, most likely, making a living from my art, whether it be my paintings or my music."

"You haven't shown me that side," Will replies, placing his glass on the coffee table. "But I wouldn't want to pressure you," he continues when the alpha's eyes focus on him.

"I have no problem in opening that door for you," the count assures him, standing up and walking to his desk, where he opens one of the drawers and takes out a brown leather folder with black ribbons, which he hands to Will before sitting down again.

Will holds it with some reverence and starts flipping through it. First, he sees the black and white drawings, done with graphite, imitations of works he can recognize from Renaissance masters like Botticelli; the detail of the pencil's strength, the shadow; he can almost imagine Hannibal with his focused features while drawing, closing his mind to the world while he focuses on his work. He turns and flips through pages of daily views of people, landscapes, some even with a bit of color. Before closing it, he looks at the last pages and comes across an image of himself, a study of his face much more idealized than it probably is in reality.

He places the folder on his lap with some reverence at the end, and when he raises his gaze to Hannibal, he is met with the alpha's inscrutable face. "They're beautiful. I'm not an expert, as you know, but I can see a lot of you in this. Passion and honesty, more than what you exhibit daily."

The smile Hannibal gives him lights up his eyes. "It's an interesting compliment. Would you say I'm not genuine?"

Will bites his lip, clutching the folder. "I would say there is an image of you and a shadow, and your persona coexists between them. I see you in our conversations, in our mutual company, but not so much when there are others or in your daily habitat."

The count's face, within the depth it always exhibits, seems to show surprise. "That's quite a shrewd reading you have."

Will shrugs. "I never said I excelled at politically correct interactions, but at least I admitted I see a lot of talent in your creations; I can see that hidden part of you that I find interesting."

His words draw a small laugh from the count, who looks at him with humor. "I think you could have pursued a career in the art of understanding people, Will. You have a gift for reading them."

Will returns the smile, and the conversation continues with the same ease as all their encounters, extending until it gets dark. Hannibal accompanies him to the door afterward, convincing him to return in one of his carriages. However, he leaves him seated on the soft silk seat.

Will still holds in his fingers the ones Hannibal took to help him climb into the carriage, and words escape him spontaneously. "Would you accompany me this weekend for some fishing, to test the hooks," he mutters without looking at him, settling comfortably in the carriage.

"I wouldn't love to be anywhere else," the count says as a final goodbye before leaving him with a gentle kiss on the back of his hand. And well, as the horses depart, Will cannot resist turning around and seeing him standing there at the door, his vision gradually fading into the horizon.

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The day looks beautiful. Will puts on a pair of slightly worn-out pants and leather boots he uses for fishing, along with one of his old shirts. Thinking it's not important, he applies even less aromatic oil.

Hannibal appears as punctual as ever at the office, dressed in what Will believes must be a suit tailored for the activity, which he would never wear in his life (but against his will, he has to admit that, like everything else, the count looks perfect in it).

Will leads him to the back exit of his residence while sharing his relationship with fishing. "The duke wasn't much of an outdoor enthusiast, and it wasn't until I started working in that office that I found this path, which has become my sanctuary in the face of social adversity," he says, indicating the beginning of the forest that borders the northern area of Townsend.

"I thought it would have been impertinent to ask earlier, but I still don't know how you met the duke and came here," Hannibal inquires, his voice tinged with curiosity.

Will sighs, stretching his arms towards the sky, creating the sound of a few popping joints. "It's not as interesting as some of the tales the gossip mongers in this town like to create," he says reproachfully, looking at the clouds. "I used to live in Virginia, near the harbor, and worked in a library. Let's just say that I knew from a young age that courtships and such things were not in my destiny. But I was good with math and literature, so when I moved to the county and saw they were looking for a file clerk, I offered my services. It wasn't a well-paying job."

Hannibal looks at him with interest but doesn't interrupt.

"The duke came and sat there once, like those gentlemen who watch people pass by. He had a worse temper than mine, and yes, I know that might seem impossible, but I'm not lying," he explains, leading Hannibal through what appears to be a path, the ground with fewer rocks and some grass. "I saw him looking so alone and old, as if something was squeezing the life out of him, and that feeling called to me. I talked to him that day and the next, and so on," he shrugs.

"As I understand, Lancaster had a horrible personality," Hannibal says, following him deeper into the trees.

"Well, yes, that, along with terrible opinions about my dynamic, women, children, and a host of other things. But I could sense the loneliness in him," Will stops, listening to the gentle sound of running water, knowing they're close to the stream.

"I have something, I'm not quite sure, but I can feel other people's emotions, Hannibal, and the duke's immense loneliness resonated with me. I could relate to how he felt," he confesses, looking into the alpha's eyes, the most expressive part of his masculine face. "A few months later, he fell ill with a fever, and I went to take care of him because he had no other family. I had already distanced myself from mine when I moved to Virginia, living in a boarding house near the library, earning just enough to get by, which had also become increasingly difficult in those months."

He pauses when he reaches the water, wetting the soles of his boots. Will smiles serenely, taking Hannibal's hand, leading them both into the river up to their ankles.

"Is that when you decided to travel with him?" Hannibal asks, looking around with what Will hopes to believe is amazement.

"After he recovered, he told me he would return here but still felt weak and asked me to accompany him. It was the first time he had asked me for something and acknowledged my presence, almost out of necessity, lying in his bed, small, terrified of being alone. Well, I had nothing to lose, and it seemed interesting to get to know the old continent."

Will closes his eyes and breathes in the forest air, the calm it brings him. He thinks about Lancaster, pale and so broken, a life of perhaps what sins and such a sad ending. He told him yes, he had no other dreams to pursue as a tiny, invisible ghost. Obviously, he couldn't have

imagined that after two years of peaceful coexistence, listening and accompanying him, the duke would bequeath his possessions to him.

"It's beautiful," Hannibal whispers almost into his ear, pulling him from his thoughts and looking at him with a charismatic smile, he says, "I understand now why you like coming here. I could draw you as a nymph."

Will simply shakes his head, feeling his face grow warm. "Alright, let's get started; we'll turn you into a fisherman."

But the intention leaves much to be desired because minutes after Hannibal struggles to balance his elegant boots on the wet rocks, he finds himself face down in the river, looking like a drenched cat with his straight hair on his face and an expression that is probably the least elegant he has ever had in his life.

Will covers his mouth, unable to contain the laughter brought on by the situation, his nerves eating away at him. With agility, he helps the count, and although he apologizes, he can't help but hide a few small chuckles.

Something in Hannibal becomes sweet; his wet hand touches Will's face, pulling him closer, and Will can't take his eyes off him. To this alpha who has shown an interest in him, who accompanies him on this simple activity and pays attention to him; to this count who looks at him as if Will were a work of art.

"Hannibal," he whispers, not finishing his sentence, not knowing how to break the moment. But he doesn't need to, because with such gentleness, the count takes his jaw in both hands, brings their foreheads close, and kisses him. So softly. Will sighs against Hannibal's lips, parting his own without knowing exactly what to do, closing his eyes and returning the kiss, mimicking the slow movements of the alpha.

It's inexplicable what he feels, nerves, his lips tremble just like his hands, which rest on Hannibal's neck, rising on the tiptoes of his old boots. He lets one hand escape and touch the back of the alpha's hand, still on his face. The kiss continues into a second and then a third, and Will finally pulls away with red cheeks and his eyes fixed on the count, who watches him with intensity.

He takes a few steps and laughs awkwardly, not knowing the protocol after kissing someone.

"Well," he comments, not looking at Hannibal but at the river, "I guess the fishing wasn't very successful."

But the alpha approaches him, taking his hand as if Will were still a maiden. "I think it was. I'd put this outing as number one on the list of our encounters, Will."

His face blushes even more at the words, and he laughs naturally again. He realizes that perhaps Beverly is right because it's the first time in his life that he has enjoyed so much.

He can't help but believe in this courtship and decides at that moment that he will trust Hannibal.

Chapter End Notes

These chapters are like life before the disaster because the angst is waiting ahead!

I hope you enjoyed it, and you know, your comments and kudos fuel my life and my translations (y para quienes me leen en español por estar suscritos, no me olvidado de mi bello idioma y mañana subiré algo!)

You can find me on Twitter as BattyMadison_ where I've been posting some mini-fics and meta comments! 😄

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Days pass, and Will continues to enjoy Hannibal's courtship. Each encounter is a unique experience, filled with details that reveal more layers of the complex count. They immerse themselves in music, art, or the tranquility of the forest.

One afternoon, while strolling through the countryside, Hannibal hands him a small package wrapped in decorated paper. Will, curious, opens it carefully and discovers an elegant fishing knife with a carved wooden handle and a shiny, sharp blade.

"I thought it might be useful for your fishing excursions," Hannibal comments, watching Will's expression.

The omega smiles, grateful for the considerate gesture. He realizes that each gift, no matter how simple, is carefully selected to reflect his interests and personality. Will appreciates that Hannibal hasn't tried to buy his affection with luxurious gifts but has sought to understand his tastes and preferences.

"It's perfect, Hannibal. Thank you," Will responds, admiring the knife with genuine appreciation.

The count nods in satisfaction, and they continue their stroll, engrossed in pleasant conversation.

Another night, Hannibal invites him to an evening at the opera, a high-class social event Will has never attended. He knows he will feel somewhat out of place amidst the elegance and grandeur, but he hopes the alpha will guide him with grace.

Will receives the invitation with excitement and nervousness. He needs help, he needs Beverly and her opinion if he doesn't want to embarrass himself or make Hannibal look bad. So, he goes to her house, with dignity, and brings her to his, showing her his wardrobe.

Beverly looks at Will with that know-it-all expression she's so good at putting on. Ever since she started courting Miss Alana Bloom, the gentle and energetic beta who arrived in town a few months ago, she's more hyperactive than ever.

She helps him choose the perfect outfit for the occasion because in Will's wardrobe, filled with simple and practical garments, they find an ensemble that could work. They opt for black trousers of fine fabric that fall perfectly over his dark leather shoes. Will wears a slightly fitted white shirt that accentuates his figure without being too tight. The shirt has subtle details on the collar and cuffs, displaying a touch of discreet elegance.

Beverly, determined to add a touch more sophistication, finds a dark jacket at the back of Will's wardrobe. Although a bit more formal than what Will usually wears, the garment

complements the ensemble impeccably, giving him an air of refinement without losing his humble essence.

Will, still feeling a bit out of place in that attire, can't help but smile at himself in the mirror.

The opera hour approaches, and Hannibal arrives at Will's residence, dressed in a dark and impeccable suit that highlights his aristocratic demeanor. Seeing him, Will is momentarily breathless.

"Hannibal, you look elegant," he searches for the right word but falls short in front of the count.

"Thank you, Will. You look stunning," Hannibal responds, admiring Will's transformation with an approving expression.

Together, they make their way to the theater, and Will feels fortunate to have someone like Hannibal by his side. The opera becomes a unique moment for him, with music, performances, and an atmosphere filled with art and culture enveloping him. Hannibal, always attentive, explains some details, sharing his love for these artistic expressions with him. Although initially unfamiliar with that world, Will immerses himself in the experience, letting himself be carried away by the beauty that surrounds him.

After the performance, Hannibal leads him to the theater gardens, where they walk among the flowers. Hannibal, after taking one of his hands, hands him a small box of fine chocolates as a symbol of the special night they shared.

"I hope you enjoyed the opera, Will. It's been a pleasure to have you by my side tonight," Hannibal says with a warm smile.

"It's been unforgettable," Will responds, appreciating the sincerity in the count's eyes. And with just a few seconds of hesitation, he decides to get closer to the alpha and kisses him as softly as the first time. It's reciprocated with passion, with charm, Hannibal's strong arms embracing him. Saying goodbye afterward is as painful as it is wonderful, thinking about what more might happen.

The relationship between them continues along with the days, weeks, and months, and Will knows he's falling in love with Hannibal. It's a terrifying and exciting feeling. Beverly, always intuitive, gives him a knowing smile when he tells her about his encounters with the count.

"Will, you're radiant. I never thought I'd see the loneliest omega in Townsend fall in love with such a handsome count," Beverly jokes.

Will smiles. He feels vulnerable, but at the same time, full of hope for a future he never imagined for himself.

It was at the age of 25 that Hannibal had the revelation that marked his path. In Italy, studying the great artists and immersing himself in bohemian life, he found his destiny.

Hannibal has always lacked the human sympathy that his sister possesses and that even his reluctant parents had. He believes that his lack of morality would have been even more notorious if his family had been victims of war rather than mere victims of time. His timely exile to England and the maintenance of his fortune allowed him to enjoy the life he has always deserved.

In Florence, Hannibal integrated into the red circles; those passages of hedonism and debauchery. There he met the mediocre beta Lucian Burr, a few years younger than him and filled with airs of grandiosity and dreams of power. Manipulating him to deflower his fiancée, an elegant lady he courted for a few months and supposedly adored, was not difficult when the prize was reaching the top in his class, rubbing shoulders with the best.

Burr's simplicity made it easy to bring him down. Hannibal moved like a snake, insinuating in his thoughts to reveal his feat until the audacity reached the ears of their families. When he found Burr crying in his room, speaking of loss, broken hearts, and how he defiled his beloved, Hannibal could only feel satisfaction.

Lambs are so easy. Later, he learned of Burr's death in a duel with another suitor and observed it as a sign of his power, of his perfect manipulation.

It was the first real game he played with consequences.

Now Hannibal strolls through his office, as elegant as the rest of the mansion. The letter from his sister Mischa, after telling her about Will, has been a tough blow, with her questioning his courtship actions, his goals.

Mischa does not share his indifference towards society and his amusements playing with the sheep, always looking at him with lovely brown eyes that see too much. And she also doesn't understand why Hannibal would put so much effort into conquering a low-profile omega.

Furthermore, she has the audacity to suggest that maybe it's Will Graham who has been conquering him, as if Hannibal could be so stupid as to fall for his own tricks, charming himself with someone like Will, the opposite of what he treasures, lacking his hedonism, his luxuries, his charisma.

How could a simple and low omega outsmart him?

Hannibal can't deny that he is attracted to him, but that doesn't mean anything at all. Will Graham is a perfect specimen of his dynamic who might have been considered a good match in any other reality, one where he possesses good taste and a personality befitting his class. It makes sense to take advantage of his courtship to kiss Will, feeling gratification after causing his cheeks to blush and his lips to turn red, delighting in his shy or sarcastic smiles.

He would be an idiot to let the opportunity slip away, to have such a delicious omega in his arms.

After calming his annoyance, Hannibal sits at his desk and begins to write, responding to Mischa with affection because his sister is the only thing he loves in this world. He explains that no, his intentions with the omega are part of his dream to reclaim Townsend and have nothing to do with empty sentimentality.

He imagines Mischa's disappointed face, asking him "why then," why not simply try to buy the property. They have enough money to do so.

But with over eight months of courtship, with weekly dates and almost daily visits, it would be a disaster to cancel his plans just because his sister questions him morally. After all, Mischa has always judged him that way, despite Hannibal having reasons to detest that Lancaster stole from them.

"The omega is not to blame for the duke's mistakes; he may not even know half of the deplorable acts he committed. And Hannibal, we did not lose everything, just that property in England, the rest is still with us, all perfect when we return to the castle. Stop, my dear brother, before your world comes crashing down."

He ignores those words, his sister's naivety and romanticism.

When he finishes his letter, sealing it and planning to send it tomorrow, his thoughts return to what he was doing before Jimmy handed him that paper.

He needs to set a date for the wedding, seal the engagement.

Will won't want anything extravagant; he would probably be happy getting married in his dreadful clothes, inviting only his unrefined friend Beverly Katz and his dog.

It will be up to him to take care of the details. It's still January, so he envisions a beautiful spring wedding, in March.

"Mr. Graham has arrived," the butler interrupts his musings, so he nods and gestures to let him in, the omega entering seconds later. His face looks flushed from the walk, and the scent he exudes is as exquisite as the first time he could smell it. Seeing Will makes Hannibal think that perhaps in another world, where they are different people, a bond with him would be born out of genuine affection.

Will walks towards him and greets him with a small kiss, holding onto his shoulders and tiptoeing; his eyes crinkle a bit when he smiles, sitting in the seat that has become his when he comes to visit. "I've spent the entire morning arguing with the companies that were left out of the railway bid. Although I shouldn't, I'm still amazed at how much trouble alphas have understanding a 'no.'"

Hannibal sits across from him, only separated by the small table. "Not everyone is very intelligent; it's something I've also noticed in my dynamic. And how is your effort going?"

The omega makes a tired face. "Well, well, I've already chosen who will be able to build the tracks. But you know, this shitty town and its council really believe I can handle it alone. I've talked to Mr. Crawford, who is the only one supporting me in contacting the offices."

Hannibal nods, knowing how difficult it has been for Will to organize and manage the arrival of the railway service, encountering idiots who don't take him seriously and having to socialize more than he would like. It's a pleasant fact that the president of the communal council and the mayor of the town are handling that issue, at least.

"But your work has been brilliant," he says, smiling. "In a few years, we'll have the first train station in Townsend. You're connecting us with hundreds, Will, it's incredible."

As usual with any compliment, Will covers his smile with his hand, looking away. His humility and shyness shouldn't be so charming.

No. So basic as the rest of him.

"Well, let's hope so," Will finally replies, his face becoming more serious. "But I haven't come just to tell you about my troubles. I've been talking to Beverly, and well, I think you're right, and it would be interesting to mark a date on the calendar for the wedding," he finishes his sentence, giving him the most magnificent smile he has ever seen.

Hannibal stands up, approaching and taking his hands. "I should send a few presents to Miss Katz for her good work in dealing with your stubborn head."

Will looks at him indignantly but allows it. "With all this courtship, even I think it's right that we set a day," he releases his hands and points his index finger forward. "But I hope you don't get your hopes up, Hannibal Lecter, that I'll take care of this. I'll just wait for the date to arrive at the church and seal the engagement."

Hannibal can't help but laugh. "So romantic is your soul, Mr. Graham," he teases, bending down a bit more and stealing another kiss.

"I know you're cursing me in that little head of yours, Will, but I'm really surprised that you think you can put on your best duds for your wedding. Not even old Lancaster would allow it!"

"Beverly, I really don't have time to be looking at dresses," he answers irritably.

"Of course, of course, just like you didn't have time to celebrate your birthday, even turning the dreaded 30 years. But Will, imagine, there will be hundreds of people, all watching you that day, and there you are, dressed in your night clothes!"

The mere thought of such a public event where he'll be the center of attention terrifies him, something that must be evident on his face because Beverly changes her tone. "Will, what if

you let me handle it? You know that on such a serious matter, I wouldn't let you make a fool of yourself, and well, look at me," she points to herself and the beautiful gray suit that ends in a dark brown skirt, covering delicate high-heeled shoes, "I have the best taste in this place."

It could be an alternative because the only other solution is to let Hannibal also take care of his dress, and well, he has already had to deal with the whole wedding, with Will only contributing some opinions, not really understanding much. For the same reason, he wouldn't want to add another problem to the alpha, especially after having such a charming evening for his birthday (Hannibal gave him a suitcase with carving materials, knowing him so well. Will still has to pinch himself to believe that this is real).

"It doesn't have to be very flashy," he replies, accepting his friend's proposal, "and not too visually striking, no white like the queen."

"You'll look magnificent!" his friend responds with mysterious smiles.

Well, it could be worse.

Later, when Beverly has already left and after finishing his work, putting away every document where it should go and feeding Winston, Will takes his usual bath, the only luxury he adores.

Soaked, he dips his head to wet his hair and then rests it on the edge of his tub. He touches his lips, thinking about Hannibal. Since that kiss by the river, so many months ago, it seems that his body has a mind of its own, or at least, the usual mind that haunts him during his horrible heats, a burdensome situation that exhausts him three times a year.

Will closes his eyes and thinks about the alpha. Until now, sexual attraction has been an almost abstract concept for him; being ignored by everyone leads to that. Even though he found the director in the library in Virginia very handsome, a few years older, he was never able to approach him.

Until Hannibal, no one had shown enough interest in him for Will to feel this way and allow himself to imagine what it would be like to be touched and to touch someone. His bodily needs have also been abstract, intense agony during his heats, locked in his room and satisfying himself with his fingers, always feeling so empty. Now his lips seem to throb at the memory of the alpha's mouth, his warm eyes, his large and strong hands when they hug him, when they help him into his carriage, when they cup his face to join in a kiss.

And in his last heat, a few weeks ago, the memories of those contacts, the scent of the alpha, gave Will the only warmth he has felt since his cycles began. He feels his cheeks flush at the lasciviousness of his thoughts, again submerging his head in the water.

Still, he can't help but smile, enchanted, dreaming of a future in which he will finally be with his alpha.

Chapter End Notes

Can you believe I forgot I was posting this fic? Haha, so I'll pick it up again! Ideally, one or two chapters per week. As you can see, it's not slowburn at all; in the next one, there will be a wedding because what's coming is the ANGST!!!

I hope you enjoyed it, and thank you so much for your kudos and comments! <3

And here is the promo for RT in Twitter <3

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

The wedding and the beginning of the end of the sweet relationship...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Like any endeavor Hannibal undertakes, orchestrating a wedding is second nature to him. Just one month remains until Will Graham inherits his last name, and with that, Hannibal will not only gain control of the financial accounts but the entirety of Townsend itself.

Hannibal contemplates the idea of hiring Will and not sending him back to his lands. After all, the omega is the mastermind behind the railway business, which he adeptly manages, and in a few years, it should be completed with the inaugural station. Perhaps he could wait until the construction begins and then decide what to do with him. Hannibal has never doubted Will's intelligence since he got to know him.

The only downside to dedicating so much time to the wedding preparations, guests, and other details is that he hasn't been able to see his fiancé much. In the rare moments they have together, Hannibal savors them, just like he does now.

Will looks at him, captivated by his words, a story from when he visited the Uffizi Gallery many years ago. "If I close my eyes, I can almost feel like I'm there with you," the omega comments in what could pass for a whisper, his expression focused. "I see you walking through those hallways, footsteps almost ghostly, inviting inspiration. Perhaps we could go there in the future."

Sitting beside him on the divan, Hannibal caresses Will's knuckles, nodding slowly. "Take a vacation after the railway development begins. We'll already be married, and I'll have all the time in the world to show you those cities."

Will's smile still seems like it's drawn by an artist's hand, wrinkling at the corners and lighting up his eyes. "Of course, of course. I must tell you on another note that Beverly has already chosen my dress. It's nothing too flashy, just what I liked among the fabrics she showed me."

Hannibal kisses the back of Will's hand, held gently between his own. "If you manage to look marvelous in your everyday suits, I can't even imagine how stunning you'll be on that day," he says, savoring the blush on Will's cheeks and his sweet scent, which seems to linger in the room.

When he bids him farewell at the door, Hannibal still feels the softness of Will's skin on his fingers, the small calluses at the tips of his fingers from the manual labor he enjoys. In his bed, the phantom touch of the omega haunts him, his smile, his precious mouth, the sounds, almost purrs, he makes after each kiss.

It's clear that seeing him so frequently and the lack of sexual activity, after months without resorting to his usual betas and omegas in London, have fixated him on Will. At least he's attractive, and after so long, completely devoted.

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The next day, Mischa arrives to meet Will and accompany them to the wedding. His sister, a decade younger, takes an instant liking to the omega, finding him "adorable" and "exquisite."

"You are very different from your brother," Will says, delicately sipping tea and smiling with that awkwardness that comes when meeting new people. "Much more amiable," he adds, giving Hannibal a teasing look that furrows his brow but doesn't hide his gentle smile.

"I am a charming gentleman, my dear Will," Hannibal defends, feeling her sister's amused eyes on both of them. "Perhaps you are confusing me with your own acerbic disposition, which legend has it has made your clients cry."

"Oh, those are rumors Beverly likes to spread. It's not my fault that someone believes I'm a moneylender and can solve their life's problems. I think I'd rather tell you about the time Hannibal thought he would be a good fisherman if he wore the latest French fashion and ended up getting to know the fish more closely than he would have liked."

Her sister laughs more loudly, impressed, and Will, with aplomb, recounts that day.

Hours pass until the omega affectionately bids farewell to both, heading back to his residence and commenting on the upcoming Sunday, the big day, saying he hopes it comes soon. "You act as if he were the sunshine of your morning, brother. I don't understand the need to deceive yourself," Mischa reproaches, returning to the living room after seeing Will off.

"I have already declared my intentions, which I will not back down from. Will Graham is part of a puzzle I've enjoyed deciphering," he asserts, sitting in his chair while sipping the cognac he had poured during the conversation.

Mischa, all blond hair and defiant eyes, paces around his living room, finally taking a seat in Will's chair. She looks at him with disappointment. "I have never bothered you about your games, Hannibal. I know there's something inherently wrong in you that prevents you from seeing the harm you've often caused. But I think you should think carefully about what you're doing right now because I recognize in your relationship with Mr. Graham the first inkling of true happiness."

"You're talking nonsense," he responds offended, leaving the alcohol on the coffee table.

"No, I'm saying what I observe, and believe me, I have no memory of seeing you fulfilled, only when you're with him. Your eyes light up as if his sight nourishes you," she states seriously.

Hannibal shakes his head, annoyed and tired of the discussion. "I'm glad to have you here with me, Mischa, that you came to my wedding, but I hope you understand that this is not a matter up for debate. I also hope you won't touch on it with Will."

Although her sister's mouth forms an angry line, she nods curtly. "I hope you know what you're doing," she says, standing up and leaving to go to bed.

He stays to finish the cognac, thinking about his future possessions and realizing he has no real plans for when he gets them. He thinks of two more days, the brilliant day when he will finalize the transaction. He believes it will be a moment like Burr's, a complete illumination.

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When the day arrives, it's the most important wedding in the area, and almost the entire town, or at least the elite, is present. Until now, Hannibal had avoided exposing Will too much to that class, not wanting to involve him in his social circle, his connections, and friendships, reluctant to have to explain when the omega loses his position and later has to emigrate.

The anxiety that the crowd produces in Will, so unaccustomed, is not motive in absolute. After all, as he explained, his father raised him as if he were a beta male, forbidding him dances and courtships, eliminating from his life the usual debut in society at the age of 16.

("It's not like I needed it," Will explained that day, with a gentle face. "I doubt that with my personality, being so pleasant and harmonious, I would have many offers and invitations.")

But now the day has come, and Hannibal’s chest seems to beat faster as he dresses, almost feeling his fingers tremble. He looks at himself in the mirror enough times to certify that he looks good, with Mischa finally pushing him to the church located in the center of the main street, illuminated with people, flowers, and decorations.

Steps away from the altar, on red carpets with gold edges, he waits, surrounded by orchestral music and dozens of eyes fixed on him. The church looks perfect, with white flowers and cornflowers, the chosen blue reflecting the omega's eyes.

Mischa, beside him, squeezes his shoulder. "I just wish you to be happy," she whispers, adjusting herself, while both look toward the end of the long aisle leading to the entrance, illuminated by the door threshold, waiting for the steps of his future spouse.

When Will finally appears, walking slowly with Beverly Katz's arm supporting him between his elbows, Hannibal seriously believes that the chest issue might be a heart or respiratory

problem.

He wears a turquoise dress, delicately covering his neck with white lace. His tiny waist is marked by other laces, light blue and azure, reaching his feet, falling in bell shape in different tones. His hair looks beautifully styled, with curls descending like spirals on his face, a crown of white flowers perched on his head.

It's like seeing an angel.

Closer now, he can observe him better while taking advantage of wiping off a confusing sweat from his hands on the silk of his black pants. Will looks nervous, his beautiful face smooth and without the usual unkempt beard, and if Hannibal were a poet, he might liken him to an elf or the nymphs with which he has so often compared him.

Will smiles shyly, full of life when he's in front of him. There's a slight blue shadow on his eyelids, playing with the color of his iris, the line of his eyes marked in black, and his lips look rosier than usual, as if he had also applied makeup.

The priest's voice pulls Hannibal out of the daydream he's in, taking the omega's trembling hand and kneeling beside him. The words of the man are unheard beneath the sound of his heartbeats echoing in his ears, responding when needed what he has memorized.

Will looks at him affectionately, so much devotion in his features, accepting their commitment, after which the priest gives them permission to kiss, which Hannibal does seconds later, taking his quivering jaw and savoring his lips.

The rest of the day seems to pass as if it were a fairy tale. Mischa and Miss Katz hug him with tears, even Miss Bloom. Mayor Crawford also congratulates both of them, and Hannibal walks Will, holding him by the waist and without letting go, quickly through his social groups until having him dancing the first piece of a waltz.

"I hope you don't think we'll dance for a long time," Will whispers in his neck, "Beverly made an effort to teach me a few steps, but I think my skill is only in walking through the forest clearings."

Hannibal kisses the curls within the crown, touching his back. "With the number of skills and virtues you have, my dear Will, I doubt that not knowing how to dance is a significant obstacle."

Will just smiles, pressing closer to his chest, following the swaying of their steps.

Feeling his warm body, it's just a moment, less than a minute, that Hannibal devotes to the thought that his sister inserted of abandoning his plans, leaving things as they are, and enjoying the omega's company.

Frowning his lips and forehead, he clears the ideas, considering them irrational, as if he were one of his puppets, any Burr, regretful of his sins. He associates it with the day, the romance, and the effort he has dedicated to courting Will Graham. It must be some syndrome developed by his proximity, his scent, his love.

Disgusted with himself, he leaves Will sitting with his friend, taking care of saying goodbye to his social circle, to Mischa, who watches him with concern. When he finishes, he searches for Will, without looking at his face, taking his hand and telling him they must leave. The omega squeezes his palm, bidding farewell to Miss Katz, and follows him to the entrance, where a carriage with white horses awaits them.

Only when Will gets on does Hannibal look out the window while his thoughts only focus on the fact that he did it. That he married the unpleasant omega. That, once again, he conquered his machinations.

After consummating the marriage, all of the omega's possessions will become his. He didn't have to spend a penny more than on the wedding to rescue Townsend and what naturally belongs to him.

He feels Will's eyes on him, his desire to break the silence, and to the disgust Hannibal has been feeling for hours and squeezing his stomach, the fury is added when Will’s scent becomes a bit more acidic, nervous. Did the omega really believe in this fake courtship? He wonders, holding his eyes toward the darkening sky, making an effort to ignore him. Did Will think he could offer him something? That his fishhooks and confessions, his trust, and devotion contained value?

In the world where Hannibal operates, those are the most pathetic weaknesses humanity has to offer. Feelings that the useless ones he has humiliated, those he has pushed out of his circles, have fallen into. It's the fragility with which Hannibal has played all his life and with which he plans to continue enjoying.

Tomorrow his lawyer will visit him, bringing with him the papers for his new possessions. Just by signing them and passing them through a notary, Wil Graham will be left only with his clothes and few belongings.

Tomorrow, after completing the process, Hannibal will call him to his office and explain his new place in the world. He will remove the blindfold from Will’s eyes and see him crumble, understanding that he has participated from the beginning in a game, that his disdain upon meeting Hannibal laid the foundations for his downfall. He can imagine his expression, the trembling of his hands, the pain in his eyes.

His throat tightens, and Hannibal can only think that it's the excitement of a new hunt completed, of having overcome all his obstacles.

Nothing more.

Chapter End Notes

The angst is coming, as I mentioned! And don't forget that this fic is full of historical inaccuracies, hahaha, just like it's inspired by romance novels and soap operas/teleseries, so it's all about that sweet, overwhelming anguish typical of that style.

I hope you liked it and are ready to hate Hannibal, muahhahaha!

And here is the promo for RT in Twitter <3

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

The wedding night is here (and more angst).

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Something in the atmosphere has changed. Will can almost smell it as he sits with Hannibal. It's as if an intense chill has taken over the interior of the carriage, distracting him even from enjoying how handsome the count looks in his formal, dark suit, as if he were a prince. He takes his alpha's hand and squeezes it, but the count continues to stare out the window as if he doesn't feel his touch.

Will tries to go over the day, analyzing if he made any inappropriate comments after the dance. Perhaps he did step on his partner's toes. Or maybe Hannibal is tired from organizing the wedding. He opens his mouth to say something and break the tense silence, but he closes it, nervous and unsure of what to mention.

As agreed, their destination is the Lecter mansion, where they will live together. Will didn't have many things, making the move easy, a process he has been undergoing in the past few days, leaving his beloved Winston at the property yesterday.

But when they arrive in front of the main door, Hannibal gets out, and without waiting, he enters.

Will stays in the carriage for a few more seconds, worried about his newlywed's mood and unable to understand what just happened. He descends carefully to avoid stepping on the dress, too valuable to be torn by his foolish feet. At least Jimmy opens the door, holding the tail of his attire as he enters.

"Lord Lecter went straight to his lounge," the butler explains, and when he sees Will taking the path there, he continues, looking at the ground, "but he said he didn't want to be disturbed."

Oh.

"I understand," Will answers in a low voice, forcing a smile. "Could you prepare a bath for me, please?"

The servant returns the gesture, nodding, and helps him reach his room next to Hannibal's, connected by a shared bathroom. Will walks to the bed after Jimmy goes to heat the water,

lifting the crown of flowers and carefully removing his clothes; unfastening the dress with the same gentleness Beverly had when helping him put it on.

When he has left it on the soft mattress, he looks down with a grimace of disgust, observing the white corset and the lace of his panties and high socks. Lingerie, an idea from his friend: to wear on his wedding night the supposed garments that are revolutionizing Paris.

Will pushes his hair back and searches in the suitcase, which he hasn't unpacked yet, for his usual pajamas: a simple long cotton shirt that reaches his knees. He puts on a robe of the same material, long and snug, one of the Duke's gifts, and while fastening it, he feels a knock on the door from Jimmy, telling him that the bath is ready.

The bathroom, like the entire property, is exquisite and gigantic. A marble tub, much more elegant than the one he had, sits in the middle, and the vanity consists of a piece of furniture with a metal-framed mirror behind it. Will sits on the almost miniature chair in front, where he looks at himself for only a few seconds, and after noticing his chin trembling and ignoring the discomfort, he begins to remove the stupid makeup, feeling so ridiculous.

Although the water is at that point between hot and warm that Will adores, his bath is short, and he can't relax due to concern about the suddenly cold attitude of the count. He goes over the wedding again and again, overlooking the details that he had already framed in his memory, giving him so much happiness (Hannibal's face when he saw him, their vows, their kiss, their first dance), and only thinking about what his mistake could have been.

God, perhaps Hannibal realized how wrong it was to marry him. To marry an omega like him. Wasting time on his courtship.

When Will lies down after extinguishing the candles that illuminated the room, leaving only the light filtering through the golden curtains of the window, he curls up, unable to fall asleep. He has some technical knowledge that his husband should knock on the door and come in to spend the night with him. Beverly made many lascivious faces when they discussed the matter, and well, Will has read a few erotic novels to understand what consummation entails.

An event to which, to his embarrassment, he has given a lot of thought. Each of his heats he has passed alone, incoherent with need, waking up with shame and full of loneliness, even those he has had since he met Hannibal. It's been 15 years of that, where self-pleasure has always been tainted by that feeling of pathetic inadequacy, of it never being enough, of being nothing more than an animal.

Until Hannibal kissed him and opened up a new world, so vast in relief, in devotion. A world where he considers himself a creature that could be desired.

But now his stomach tightens with nerves, with uncertainty, and when the door is gently knocked, Will has no certainty of what will come. He hears his name in Hannibal's voice and accepts him to enter, hearing the firm steps after the door is closed, leaving the room in darkness once again.

He can barely make out his profile in the doorway. "Hannibal, I thought you wouldn't come," he says with his usual humor, trying to break the awkwardness.

"It wouldn't be a wedding if I didn't," the count replies with his marked and terse accent as he sits at the foot of the bed. In the light from the window, Will notices that he is also wearing his sleepwear, a shirt and pants made of a fabric that shines similar to silk, although he can't quite make out the color.

Will swallows hard, and his hands sweat as his face blushes. For a moment, he considers telling him to wait so he can put on the clothes Beverly got him, wanting to look beautiful. But nerves have him paralyzed, so aware of his inexperience and how plain his body is, believing that he will only end up looking even more ridiculous. So, settling among the soft pillows, he simply asks, "What do I have to do?"

His question echoes in the tension in the air as Hannibal's figure seems like marble, frozen in time and equally cold. Not being able to see his eyes well adds to his nervousness, making him feel ignorant.

(Because Will knows Hannibal has slept with others, that an alpha from his world has had partners, that he has known the pleasures of the flesh. It's knowledge that has always been a shadow causing him doubts, not about his husband but about himself, about the absolute terror of not being enough and thereby causing his distance).

Finally, the alpha's voice breaks the heavy silence. "Turn around, Will, put your head on the pillow. You don't have to worry about anything else," he whispers, getting up and sitting on his side, quietly observing his obedience. "I'll take care of the rest."

Will lies down in a position he knows from his novels and that feels natural in his heats; supported between his arms and flexed knees, his cheek resting on the feather pillow. He feels Hannibal move the sheets of his body, caressing his neck with his elegant fingers, and breathing deeply as he also settles on the bed. Will closes his eyes, focusing on the phantom sensations of his husband, opening his knees and sinking his torso further when the alpha's hand lifts his nightshirt, exposing the bare skin of his legs and buttocks, even his back.

The cold doesn't manage to affect him because Hannibal's heavy body lies seconds on top of him, causing his thighs to open wide to let him position himself. He feels how his pussy gets even wetter than it has been since his husband sat next to him, dripping down the inside of his legs, making him squeeze his eyelids even tighter and emit a dry moan that ends in a meow.

Hannibal kisses his throat, making his skin tingle, presses against him, and moves his hands as if he were drawing: one touches his right nipple, hardened and sensitive to the touch, eliciting more groans; while the other caresses his thigh, spreading the moisture until it reaches the source in his crotch. When his fingers touch the lips of his vulva, swollen and so wet, Will feels like he sees stars in the darkness behind his eyelids and can do nothing but whimper, "Hannibal, please, *god, Hannibal*."

His alpha moves his hips against his ass, releasing his nipple, and Will hears the silk move until he feels a hard pressure between his buttocks, which he assumes is his erect member. He

lets out a new moan, arching his spine, needing so much for something to fill the void inside him, to make him complete, to touch him until he can't take it anymore. Will doesn't need to beg since he receives the direct contact of the wet head on his perineum until he feels it in the tight opening that hides his ass, passing between his asscheeks. "*Alpha*," he whispers in a thin voice, squeezing the pillow, his skin boiling.

The fingers that haven't stopped caressing his sensitive cunt finally penetrate him gently, pulsating the internal wall that leads to his lower belly, making him moan like never before, feeling everything tighten inside him, a bright white illuminating his mind: the friction in his anal hole along with the thick fingers invading his pussy make him fall off the wave and swim in a deep pleasure he has never known.

Will's senses slowly return, except for his sight, because he remains with his eyelids closed, hearing his meows and even smelling the strong and sweet fragrance of his own fluids, which wet his thighs and Hannibal's hand, dripping down to the bed. His hips continue to move in a swaying motion, but the vague feeling of shame that has run through him since his alpha began touching him squeezes his chest and causes him to speak, dragging the words, "I'm so sorry," mumbles, burying his face in the pillow, moving his mouth enough to breathe, feeling that somehow he has failed.

Hannibal doesn't answer, just kisses his shoulders, and with a clearly known movement, he settles better on top of him, squeezing his hips and opening his legs even more, leaving them on top of his own. The head of his member moves away from his hole, which is still fluttering, moistened by Hannibal's fluids. The alpha moans loudly as he positions himself between the lips of his pussy, his fingers supporting the movement before starting to enter with a thrust that is infinite. This is how he penetrates him, with short and increasingly intense thrusts, until Will thinks he can feel it in his throat. One of the alpha's hands returns to his nipples, which he spoils by squeezing them, then moving down to start masturbating his forgotten member, as red as the rest of him, releasing and releasing fluid that sticks to his belly.

"Will," he hears Hannibal murmur, the only word in their strange silence, the alpha's hands rising to his waist, squeezing him against his torso and making his knees rise even more. Will tries to imitate his movements clumsily, still dazed by his orgasm and the feeling of fullness that the member inside him generates, feeling his pussy tighten and release with each unconscious thrust, as if it knew by nature what to do.

He loses track of the minutes in which he is possessed by Hannibal, intoxicated by the act, the pleasure he feels for the first time, and that he has dreamed of so much and desired eagerly. His moans reach a new high note, and his sweat sticks his curls to his forehead when his husband's cock swells inside him, getting thicker and thicker until Will feels an exquisite pain that only allows him to come again, hearing the echoes of his alpha's pleasure. His member wets the sheet with each jet he throws, while his pussy tightens the knot inside of him, but not even his strong internal muscles can prevent some of the moisture from escaping to his thighs.

Will falls exhausted on the bed, purring like he has never done before while he hears a growl from Hannibal. He lets go of the pillow and reaches back, touching the alpha's side, looking

for his hand, his contact. But he doesn't find it; his husband turns them around, and although Will feels his breath on his nape, legs behind his own, and his interior still stimulated and full, his husband doesn't touch him.

"Hannibal," Will calls, opening his heavy eyes and looking forward into the darkness that leads to the door. He closes them again, concentrating on the little contact, on the feeling of fullness that slips away like sand between his fingers. He doesn't know how much time passes until his alpha moves, his knot deflating and slipping out of him, causing his pussy to empty, warm, and swollen. He feels the weight of the other's body leaving the bed, and the feeling of uncertainty and a bewildering pain stop him from saying his name again.

Will only sees his figure open the door and leave, closing it gently. He feels his throat tighten with a sob, wounded by the indifference, by the impersonal nature of the encounter. The last thing that accompanies him before sleep is the epiphany that throughout the consummation, Hannibal never kissed his lips.

Chapter End Notes

And well, how much are we hating Hannibal? In the next chapter, Will finally discovers the scheme, so we continue with the ANGST!

I must say that while all in this fic is excessively melodramatic (because, you know, inspired by old romantic novels lol), let's not forget that canon Hannibal is still a bastard who also played with Will's feelings: that "don't lie to me" from Will trembling and crying in despair, and Hannibal shamelessly lying to him is so painful ;__; (damn! and yet he looks like a "Pikachu surprised" when Will betrays him in Season 2 haha sorry for the rant)

Thank you very much for all your comments and kudos! While we're in the angst arc, there's a long journey ahead with Hannibal trying to win back Will!

Here is the promo for RT in Twitter ❤️

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

The confrontation: Hannibal reveals his plans to Will, and Will finally understands the purpose of it all.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will wakes up with a headache after crying for most of the night. His groin and his thighs feel sore, so he curls up before opening his eyes. The sun streams through the curtains, indicating it's later than his usual waking hour.

He feels confused and, God, wounded. The night wasn't what he expected or what he had dreamed of since taking the courtship seriously. It wasn't what he had wanted each time he thought of making love to Hannibal.

It's not that he didn't feel pleasure, because he remembers that (the pleasant burning sensation as his muscles tightened), but the indifference of his alpha, his disinterest, as if Will were just another body, is the only thing governing him. Perhaps his own inexperience was tiresome to Hannibal, seeing him there like a ragdoll not knowing what to do, just groaning like a beast.

His eyes start to sting again, so he rubs them forcefully, sitting on the bed and deciding to go look for Hannibal, to demand answers.

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It's interesting how a simple event can change a person.

When Will leaves his room, dressed in his usual clothes except for a jacket, Jonathan, one of the servants, informs him in the hallway that Hannibal is meeting with his lawyer and, once again, requested not to be disturbed. Waiting to have him alone, Will decides to go to the kitchen to make the tea that Beverly mentioned, the one that shouldn't have unexpected surprises. After drinking the bitter infusion, he plays with Winston in the garden, giving him the affection he didn't give him yesterday when they returned from the wedding.

However, his mind isn't with his dog; it's filled with concerns. Will tries to pass the time until the sun is directly overhead at noon. He enters the kitchen, greeting other employees, takes a

glass of water, and wipes away the sweat, seeking composure before going to Hannibal, now that he should be available.

He knocks on the door of the study, seeing Hannibal's aristocratic profile looking out the window. “I thought we could have breakfast together,” Will says, walking with restless steps, unable to sit in his usual chair.

His husband turns, with impenetrable features and dark eyes. “We need to talk,” he replies, walking to his desk and lifting a black portfolio.

Will clenches his hands in his pants, feeling like a hole is opening beneath his feet, and his chest tightens when he tries to interrupt, trying to stop whatever Hannibal is about to say. “Couldn't it wait? There's so much we could do,” he responds with more desperation than he would like.

But Hannibal ignores him, as he has since they got on the damn carriage. “What we have left to discuss is essential for our coexistence, Will. I believe you're intelligent enough to understand.” Hannibal's long legs cover the distance to approach Will, who still awkwardly stands beside the chair, to hand him the portfolio.

With trembling hands, Will opens it and, upon reading its contents, the itching in his eyes returns. He feels his legs weaken, sitting more out of necessity than desire, rereading the typed letters until he can't see them through his teary vision. He lets the portfolio fall onto his lap, scratching his eyelids forcefully, holding back the tears, aware of the sad spectacle he's starring in.

Those damn papers. Each one indicating that Hannibal Lecter is the new owner of Townsend. It's logical, being his alpha, but Will, as his husband, is intelligent, as Hannibal pointed out. He recalls his initial contemplations of the count, suspicions about his character and intentions. How, with so much stupidity, he dismissed them in the face of affection. “Was it for this, everything, was it for this?” he quivers, looking at the alpha who observes him impassively.

“You didn't want to sell,” Hannibal replies, shrugging, as if he isn't destroying his world, “and I had to find another solution. When I mentioned that Lancaster managed our accounts, I overlooked the magnitude: not only did he manage them, but he stole them when Lithuania went to war. Hence, Townsend and the entire estate belonged to him, and he erased any evidence of his wrongdoing.”

“That doesn't justify your actions. Are you telling me you did this for justice?” Will asks, his body trembling and the tears wanting to leave his eyes.

“My arrival in London and subsequently in this town was always with the goal of reclaiming my properties. My true inheritance. I asked you to sell, and it was you who never inquired about the business my family might have had with the duke.”

Will feels disappointment, anger, and disillusion consume him, emitting a broken laugh. “No, Hannibal, you can't blame me for this,” he asserts with tense lips as words escape him in

desperation. “I love you,” he whispers, wounded. He can't believe this, can't understand, doesn't want to. “I love you,” he repeats, his chin trembling.

The alpha watches him even more inscrutable. “You accepted my courtship and my marriage proposal. You're not a naive fool to believe that all marriages are the result of sentimentality.”

Will lowers his gaze, unable to continue looking at the alpha, his downfall. He wants to shout at him, hit him, demand answers for his promises, for having enamored him, for having married him under such a fraud. For making him believe there was something lovable about him, for making him feel desired.

But Will does nothing. Intense emptiness possesses him, squeezing his chest, throat, stomach. He stands up slowly, leaving the portfolio on the chair, walking toward the door, ignoring the alpha's presence, who returns to the window.

“I would have sold everything, Hannibal. It was unnecessary for you to go this far,” he whispers, and it's the last thing he says before leaving.

As he closes the door, Will thinks his heart stops, and all his dreams and plans abandon him in that instant, forcing him to return to his room, lie on the bed, and pray to go back to the beginning, to his little office, to his peaceful life.

Will doesn't come down for lunch, causing Mischa to look at Hannibal worriedly at the table. He ignores her, as he has been ignoring everything since he arrived at the mansion, since he got off the carriage and began to execute the final stage of his plans.

"Do you think he's sick?" asks his sister, who has already packed her suitcase to return to Lithuania. "I was hoping to say goodbye to my new brother-in-law after lunch."

Hannibal leaves the utensils crossed on his plate, not finishing the food because of his nonexistent appetite. "We had an argument," he replies bluntly.

Mischa watches him until her eyes widen, dropping the fork and standing up with a force that makes her chair wobble. "Tell me you didn't."

These aren't shouts; his sister speaks in murmurs when she's furious. "Tell me you didn't ruin the only good thing you've achieved in your miserable life," she repeats.

Hannibal gets up deliberately, leaving the white napkin on the table and walking to his sister. "Let's not make a spectacle of this. I never lied to you about my goals or my intentions toward the omega."

He barely sees Mischa's hand move; he only feels his face burn as he receives the slap that even moves his jaw, pushing him backward. His sister's serene face looks disappointed, a look he has never seen.

"You and your teacups, breaking them because you can, for the pleasure it gives you to make them fall."

Hannibal smells her tears but doesn't move; he is paralyzed.

"I'm leaving now," Mischa states, not looking at him, hugging herself. "I can't face saying goodbye to Will, to see how you destroyed him, knowing I could have prevented it by telling him everything," her gaze remains just as disappointed. "I didn't because I thought you would follow your heart, thinking you were in love."

"Mischa," he says, searching for the words to reassure her, to convince her that this has only been a more intense game than the previous ones.

But his sister doesn't listen; she just purses her lips. "But it's clear that's impossible. The last thing you feel for Will Graham is love; he has only been another of your puppets."

Frozen in the moment, Hannibal sees her leave the dining room, hears her footsteps in the hallway, and hears others, low voices talking.

He realizes that Will was there, that he heard everything.

Feeling something unknown preventing him from confronting them, Hannibal goes to the stairs leading up to his office. There he locks himself in, and with trembling hands pours himself a whisky, sits on his divan, and closes his eyes.

Nothing that happened is his fault.

Will should have suspected what he was getting into. Knowing that an omega as low-class as him could never interest an alpha of Hannibal's caliber.

Will's feelings are not his responsibility.

He thinks of Will's face, his tearful eyes, the rictus of pain marking his delicate features. His small hands clutching the documentation that sealed their fates. So much time waiting for the moment when he would make Will fall from his pedestal, breaking that annoying superiority, exposing him as the pathetic creature he has always been.

It's regrettable that Hannibal doesn't feel the pleasure he has always felt in finishing someone, destroying the pride and dignity of some sheep.

This humiliation tastes like ashes.

Hannibal brings the glass to his forehead, feeling a horrible headache adding to the throbbing in his cheek. He hears his sister's carriage depart and furrows his brow.

If losing Mischa's affection is the price of this machination, perhaps it wasn't worth it. He remembers Will's words, telling him that he would have sold the property. Maybe Hannibal should have put more effort into that enterprise and not become obsessed with destroying the omega.

He leaves the whisky on the table, bringing his hands to his face, breathing deeply. Behind his eyelids, he only sees blue eyes soaked in tears; he only hears his sobbing, his declaration of love.

Hannibal tries to remember other moments; in his office, by the river, on the street. Here, talking, keeping each other company in silence. But everything is disturbed by the new memory, by the unease in the omega's body, by his sour smell of desperation.

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Hannibal doesn't see Will the next day or the next. The omega avoids him skillfully, eating in his room where he even keeps his dog.

On the fourth day, he is visited by Will's presence in the living room. His face looks haggard, his small body holding itself.

"I want you to explain this to me thoroughly. What do you expect to happen from now on?" Will asks without looking him in the eyes, so similar to their first encounters.

Hannibal gets up, imitating his previous behavior when he only sat after the omega had settled. But Will remains standing, looking out the window, arms crossed and fingers cracking on his biceps.

"You could take a seat," he murmurs, and the omega drops into his chair, uncomfortable.

Sitting again, he thinks it's fair to reveal his machination when he sees Will's face becoming more inscrutable, his eyes melancholic. So Hannibal begins to speak and when he finishes his story, Will's head looks almost bowed, and when he speaks, his voice comes out in a whisper. "I have nothing, Hannibal, not a penny saved," he brings a pale and trembling hand to his forehead. "I didn't think it was necessary. I'm such a fool," he says, finally putting both palms on his face.

The uncomfortable feeling, that discomfort in his chest, resurfaces and makes Hannibal avoid eye contact. "You could still work in the office. I haven't lied when I told you I consider you intelligent. I believe you are the only one capable of finalizing the railway business."

Will puts his hands on his knees again, his face worried. "I still have my usefulness," he replies. His knuckles look white. "I suppose it's no longer necessary for us to see each other with the same frequency; I imagine it's a relief for you."

The omega's face seems to tighten; he bites his lip forcefully before adding, "And the people?" His voice cuts off, he brings a hand to his mouth, as if trying to stifle what he feels. "What do I tell Beverly? They will know, and you will want to return to your life."

Hannibal stands up, and for a few seconds the unquestionable desire to kneel beside Will, to take his hands and reassure him overwhelms him, his useless instinct trying to govern him.

But he suppresses the need as he has become an expert in doing. "I don't think it's necessary; I didn't introduce you to all my circles for a reason, and my relationships are in London, Will. Hardly anyone would make a scene. Our marriage wasn't even announced in the newspapers; believe me, I doubt anyone cares."

But his words don't calm Will, whose mouth tightens even more, as do the hands on his knees. "Of course," he affirms, nodding slowly and standing up. "This has only been a farce, nothing that affects your real life."

Hannibal doesn't respond; he just watches him leave, closing the door gently.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this chapter!! We still have more anguish ahead, but with Hannibal realizing what he has lost.

Kudos and comments are love <3

The promo in Twitter is here for RT <3

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Hannibal seems to be leaving that Nile River in Egypt, and Will is planning.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It's amazing the feeling of missing someone, no matter how undesired that person may be.

Hannibal notices it when he realizes he saves comments for Will about his day, about something he saw or thought of, accustomed to hearing the omega's opinions, his insightful analysis. Will always ready to speak the truth even if it means clarifying that Mr. Turquin, the promising district deputy, is a "perverted old man, I can tell just by looking at him, Hannibal."

Then he remembers that the omega doesn't talk to him, avoids him, and hasn't looked into his eyes again. The closest is staring at Hannibal's nose, eyebrows, and, in case there's eye contact, it never lasts more than a few seconds.

Hannibal watches Will play with Winston before leaving early in the morning for his office. He listens to him in the kitchen during the nights, searching for his dinner. He stops himself from following, from calling his name when he knows he has nothing to say.

Worse, he observes Will in his dreams, in his thoughts, lying in bed. In the memory of his sweet and warm body, the tremble of his back, the dampness between his legs, and his soft moans. His voice filled with that unconditional love Hannibal managed to obtain after hours and hours of a carefully planned conquest.

Sometimes he dreams of what could have been: Will all lovely eyes, enchanted, hugging his shoulders, moaning.

Himself surrendering to love him.

But Hannibal wakes up with the dissonance of what actually happened; only thinking about Will's nerves, the smell of his embarrassment, of leaving him alone in his sheets.

Hannibal almost feels like it's better this way, that the omega ignores him.

But he also wishes Will would confront him, shout at him, throw his pain in his face.

Hannibal should have expected this reaction from Will, just like his silence in keeping the truth to himself, not even advertising it to his best friend. An introverted soul so eager for

affection like the omega's would never have responded with violence unless the suffering was directed elsewhere. Being just him, of course, he internalized the pain. The guilt.

It's the feeling of missing Will that leads Hannibal to find him. He tells himself it's a coincidence, after returning from a gathering with other alphas, when he bumps into Will in the hallway minutes after arriving.

"Will," he calls, stopping him by the stairs.

The omega looks at his brown scarf, halting his fast walk. Hannibal searches for the reason he said his name, an excuse to sustain his presence. His eyes light up when he continues, "I wanted to ask you about the trains, about the updates you have with Mr. Crawford. Please."

After a few seconds of hesitation, Will nods, and Hannibal leads them to his office, feeling the tension and, for some reason, wanting to touch the omega; his hand, his arm, his face. He can only clench his fist to contain the stupid desire his instincts provoke.

"We've already signed with the construction company, and the loan is ready for them to buy the materials, so in a few months, we should officially have the first link of tracks," Will explains, looking out the window, touching the curtain with slow fingers.

Hannibal smiles. "It's fantastic news; I wouldn't have expected anything less from your work."

The omega turns irritated, eyes back on his scarf. "There's no need for you to praise me just because, Hannibal. In fact, I'd prefer if you didn't. If you had even a bit of respect for me, you wouldn't."

The smile fades from his face, and the discomfort in his abdomen multiplies. He wants to tell him it's not a lie, that despite everything, he has always held him in high professional esteem. But Will's posture, fragile and wounded, silences him.

Hannibal wants to talk to him, hear his opinions and insults. See Will laugh while covering his mouth, with that tender shyness.

But before he can find the path to resume the dialogue, the omega leaves the window and storms off, only a dry farewell before leaving him immersed in his loneliness.

If Will could explain how he feels, he would say numb.

He tries to continue with his routine, no matter how broken it is, pretending that nothing has changed. But even Beverly doesn't believe him, suspecting that something is terribly wrong (he can't bring himself to tell her the truth, to reveal the nature of his marriage to Hannibal. To open the doors for her to also blame herself for this hole he got into on his own).

How to explain what's happening? That he made the biggest mistake of his life, that he handed over his battered heart to someone who not only doesn't love him but sought his downfall from the very beginning. To a man whose goal was to humiliate him, to whom he gave his body and love, both so unworthy on the scale.

Will really tries, but it's impossible not to think about every date, every word, searching for falsehood in affections, obsessing over examining everything and repeating to himself, *would Hannibal want to kiss me? Was it a sacrifice to touch me?*

Will thought he knew Hannibal. The person inside the versions of the dandy, the count, the alpha. The artist full of intelligence, humor, freedom. That pulsating darkness. He believed he could read beyond his image, his genuine self, the layers and layers that make up his person.

He was so stupid.

Will knew from the beginning that it was too good to be true. But his doubts were abandoned at the slightest sign of affection. That there might be someone who wanted to call him *mine*.

He pours all his effort into the trains, into hurrying the start of construction by any means necessary. The rest of the time Will spends looking for solutions, something that will forever keep him away from this place. He curses everything: accepting the courtship, coming here with the duke. Not selling when he could have, avoiding this whole nightmare.

Meanwhile, Hannibal seems to get bored with the new status quo because he seeks him out, feigning interest again as if Will were willing to make the same mistakes. The alpha tries to resume their conversations and provoke dialogue between them, as if just seeing Hannibal doesn't reopen wounds in his heart that will never stop bleeding.

The worst part is not being able to hate him, no matter how hard Will tries. Despite everything, he loves him, even this withered version that revels in destruction.

The worst part is not being enough. He recalls Mischa's words in the argument he overheard. There must be something so wrong with him for not to have succeeded in making Hannibal love him. He's always known that's the case; since he was born and his father forbade him dresses, carriages; since he realized that to be loved wasn't in his destiny.

But Will is weak and so in love. It seems that his sentimentality is written in his blood because when Hannibal serves him a glass of cognac, his favorite, he accepts it after rejecting the offering for months.

However, Will avoids eye contact. It's impossible for him since it only brings to the surface the shame he's felt since they slept together. But he does listen to him, commenting here and there, trying not to be affected, fearful of this new game Hannibal started after taking everything from him.

And none of it matters in the end. Because Will must be a masochist to still desire the alpha's company, to make him laugh and listen to his voice.

"We could go to London for a few days," Hannibal says one afternoon while playing chess.

Will moves his piece, calculating that he will win easily. "I have no business there; I've already sent all the necessary documentation for the trains."

He sees Hannibal smile out of the corner of his eye. "But there's so much you could see in the city. You told me you only stayed two days with the duke before traveling here."

"Of course, more time was unnecessary," he replies, uneasy.

"I'd like to show you the museums," the alpha comments, advancing with a pawn. "I'm sure you'd love them."

Is the alpha trying to pretend they're a married couple, or would he pass him off as his secretary? Will shakes his head. "I don't think I'm made for that kind of thing; they don't suit me."

Hannibal falls silent, and his voice sounds gentle when he speaks again. "Of course."

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Jack Crawford is a tall alpha with one of those commanding presences that fill the space around him, especially when he's happy, as is the case at the moment, both of them talking in Will's office.

"In five months, the installation will begin. A success!" he exclaims, giving a firm handshake.

Will can't help but catch the enthusiasm and smile. "I believe so," he agrees, but then brings out the pragmatism that always accompanies him. "However, it will be at least five years for the development of the station, Mr. Crawford."

The alpha gestures affirmatively and responds, "But that's normal. The issue here is that we secured a quite favorable contract, and with the start of construction, our trade will thrive as all businesses will want to take advantage of the future connection. I bless the day the duke brought you here, Mr. Graham."

"Nonsense," Will mutters somewhat overwhelmed. "It's what was expected of my role managing the vast property. It would have been a waste not to study this business."

"Nonsense your words. I'll have to congratulate Count Lecter for taking you as his spouse. Besides, my dear Bella has always held you in high esteem," the alpha pauses for a moment to add, "I still don't understand your refusal to visit us for dinner."

Of course not, as if Will had the idea of going out with Hannibal somewhere. Any desire is just that, a mere wish, impossible in reality.

He has a pleasant chat with the alpha about the future of the town, and when Crawford leaves, extracting a promise to at least consider his invitation, Will goes up to his old bedroom, sitting on the unused bed. In five months, it will also be the anniversary of his marriage, a year of this parody of "together until death" he entered into.

Will doesn't think he can last any longer, waiting to see the years pass, the tension until Hannibal leaves him to resume his life in London, his romantic relationships. Or the persistent torture of sitting close to him; being able to smell him, hear him, love him so damn much.

No.

But for a few weeks now, a solution has been forming in his mind, painful but usable at this point: perhaps everything the duke left him is no longer his, but he still has certain belongings much older than his friendship with Lancaster; possessions Will has kept to himself, unable to part with them.

Until now.

Because while his father detested his nature, his mother, at least before losing her, always wanted to have an omega and pampered him until her departure. When Will left the family home, with only two suitcases in his hands and just turning 21, he took with him a precious gift from his mother among his belongings.

Will stands up and lifts the mattress, pulling out a small marble box with a golden lock from underneath. He caresses it gently and opens it with the key in his pocket. Inside, he sees the delicate gold and ruby jewelry, a necklace and earrings for an omega of the highest class, a gift from his mother when he turned one year old. His most precious gift and the only thing characteristic of his dynamic that his father allowed him to have.

In 30 years, Will has never worn them, not even at his wedding, always feeling incapable of making them shine, waiting for a moment when it would be worthwhile.

Now he touches them delicately, seeing in them the only way to save himself, thinking that these things aren't made to be used on someone like him.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked this chapter! Will saving himself is my happiness, but there's still a long way of anguish, especially with Hannibal increasingly realizing what he lost.

Thank you very much for your kudos and comments. I really enjoy reading your opinions on the story's development! <3

The promo for RT in Twitter is here ❤️

Interlude

Chapter Summary

Interlude: What could have been! (smuuuuut)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hannibal, I thought you wouldn't come," Will's soft voice echoes in the room, his figure lying on the bed and disappearing into the darkness. Hannibal enters with slow steps, closing the door and gazing at the omega.

He sees Will fumbling under the sheet, nervous. Although the desire to approach and reassure him envelops Hannibal within seconds, he only responds, "It wouldn't be a wedding if I didn't."

Sitting at the foot of the bed, he can only observe part of Will's face as he settles between the pillows, his fragrance tinged with doubt. The night light enters through the window, illuminating the omega's features—his beautiful lips, his affectionate eyes. "What do I have to do?" Will asks, his hands moving at the edge of the blanket.

And Hannibal thinks about what he came to do, to consummate the marriage and fulfill his objective. He thinks about months of courtship, companionship, and conversations; the effort to win the omega's heart; to reclaim what has always been his by birthright.

But the scent of vulnerability paralyzes him. The sight of Will, always so unattainable, so reserved like no one else, here, on his bed and waiting for him. Here, on his bed, asking him what he has to do, surrendering with such devotion.

Could Hannibal regret it, stop his machinations, and let himself be carried away by this *feeling* that has haunted him since he first met that neurotic gaze?

"Hannibal?" Will says, adding a scent of concern to the air.

Hannibal moves, sitting next to the omega, his weight sinking the mattress. Closer, he still can't see Will's face well, but he feels his breath, the tension in his body. Slowly, he touches his cheek, caressing it gently. "Do you love me?" he whispers, not wanting to break the moment.

Will takes his other hand in his, "Of course!" he answers confidently. His voice becomes more trembling as he adds, "Did I do something wrong?"

And Hannibal's heart tightens, as it has every time he recognizes his actions, when he ignores the denial that underlies him and opens his eyes to this, to what he has. Ultimately, it's a simple decision, a step that only frees him and makes his lips smile, "Nothing, my love. Just that I've been a fool," he affirms, bringing his face closer and kissing the omega with the affection he has been telling himself doesn't exist for so long.

Will hugs him, bringing his mouth to Hannibal's neck, where his scent is stronger, kissing the soft skin and murmuring that everything is fine. He feels Will's hands descend to his shoulders, anchoring.

Hannibal lifts his head, looking at his husband, glimpsing his precious eyes in the shadows. He kisses him, savoring his taste, his hands squeezing Will's tiny waist, feeling Will's hips trying to move. His groin has been hardened since he entered, heated by the scent of his omega and his beauty. He can feel Will's in a similar state, a bulge hidden under his nightgown.

He reluctantly separates from his lips, hearing the small moan Will lets out, straightening up between his legs. Carefully, he touches his knees, moving them to place his feet on the mattress, raised, his old nightgown riding up on his thighs. "Can I undress you, my beloved?" The tremor in his own voice surprises him, laden with desire. His pants uncomfortably press against his member.

Will nervously laughs, his hands holding his nightgown, "I imagined something like this, hard to have intercourse with clothes on."

And Hannibal wants to turn on the lamps to see his eyes, his likely blushing face and that impertinent smile. But his omega's nerves and shyness prevent him from asking for so much, so he settles for raising the nightgown gently, kissing his knees, his thighs, until leaving the fabric on his hips, brushing his small cock, and then lifting the nightgown from the waist to continue with his mission.

It's Will who finishes, straightening up and taking off his clothes, crossing his arms on his chest. Although he tries to close his legs, Hannibal's body still between them, prevents the action. Furthermore, he places his hands on his thighs, squeezing them against his hips, while still consuming his mouth.

Will's arms return to his shoulders, holding on tightly, trying to remove his shirt. "You too," Hannibal hears him command with a bossy tone, while with those glorious thighs, Will pulls him closer.

Hannibal feels dizzy, but obeys, moving back enough to take off the offensive clothes: his shirt on the floor and his pants at his ankles, kicked off with his foot at the end of the bed. He kisses the omega again, feeling their naked skins collide in a sensation he doesn't recognize, one that only makes him want to sink into that warmth awaiting him.

He feels Will freeze when their groins touch without barriers, their hard members colliding with their heads. It's a contact that makes him growl and breathe slowly to avoid coming prematurely. He kisses Will’s lips affectionately, calming him, and starts to work: one of his hands stays on his face, moving it down his collarbone to reach his left nipple, which he

touches with circular movements, making Will bury his head in the pillow, letting out an audible sigh.

His other hand rests on Will's inner thigh, feeling the firm muscle in his palm, wet. Hannibal follows that moisture to the source, his fingertips outlining the swollen lips of his cunt. He can't help but close his eyes when he feels them, imagining them as pink as those on his face. He kisses Will’s neck again, biting it gently, while his fingers penetrate that exquisite warmth, making their way with reverence.

"Hannibal, *please*," he hears Will moan while covering his eyes with one hand and burying the other in his back; his thighs, if possible, falling more open, and Hannibal can't hold back anymore, leaning back, lowering his lips to his nipples, his navel, kissing the tip of Will's cock resting against his abdomen, its fat and wet head also hot to the touch, his veins pulsating. He leaves it until reaching his cunt and being able to lick that delicacy that only releases more moisture.

"Hannibal, for God's sake, that, *that*," Will's voice gets lost in a series of meows, his hips moving as he fucks against his mouth. Hannibal wants to devour him, enjoy eternity between his thighs, consume him until they are one. He feels Will's trembling thighs at his sides tighten, his chest rising and his back arching, a scream escaping his lips, and Hannibal can taste in his mouth a sea of flavor and smell the fluids Will deposited on his own belly.

He rises with heaviness, wiping his face with his hand, licking it to not waste anything. He looks at Will, sunk into his pillows, one hand still covering his eyes while the other is on his abdomen, next to his member still releasing semen; his thighs remain open, knees fallen on the sheets, and he can almost see his cunt tightening and opening again, expelling more moisture.

It's inevitable to take him in his arms, devouring his mouth with passion, holding him close, caressing him until both are sitting. Hannibal brings the palm of his hand to Will’s face, receiving a small kiss on its back. Positioned like this, he can finally see Will's features thanks to the window's light—the tears marking his eyelashes; so thick and endless; his red and bitten little mouth; and his satisfaction. His affection and love.

Gently, he positions Will on top, his legs crossed and pulling him closer, feeling the omega's shiver at the new contact between their bodies, at the touch on his stimulated cunt and member. "Is it alright like this?" he asks his Will, who nods shyly, burying his face in his neck.

With one hand, Hannibal strokes his back, the cleft where his round buttocks begin. With the same gentleness, Will steadies himself on his shoulders, lifting up a bit to position himself over his cock. "Is it alright like this?" he mimics his question, lifting his face from Hannibal’s neck and looking him in the eyes.

Hannibal nods vigorously, using his other hand to support the penetration, holding his cock that is already kissing that wet cunt. Will lowers himself slowly, closing his eyes and biting his lower lip, a small moan escaping his mouth. Despite wanting to stay forever watching his omega's expression, Hannibal ends up closing his eyes out of necessity, feeling his member gloriously squeezed in a space made for him.

It's not difficult to start a rhythm, a play with their hips, with Will rising and sinking, faster each time, his cunt enveloping his entire member, and his penis receiving the friction against his belly, the hair there. Hannibal lowers his face to kiss his nipples, tight and reddened, biting them from time to time, while with one of his hands he aids Will's movements, fucking him with love.

"You're the most exquisite thing I've ever known," Hannibal whispers on his chest, listening to his heart pump quickly. Will only moans his name, his cunt wetting both of their inner thighs, his tight muscles not losing focus.

His other hand, still on the lower part of Will's back, Hannibal leaves it on one of his buttocks, feeling them harden with his movements. Unable to resist the desire, he runs his fingers through the cleft of his buttocks, wet also with his juices. Will screams again at the touch, shivering and moistening, if possible, even more. "Oh, God, *Hannibal*, please, *please*," he meows.

Hannibal kisses his neck, satisfying himself with his scent, while with his hand, he caresses the small opening between the buttocks, so tight and exquisite. It's just that touch, and Will hugs him tightly, his cunt contracting with such vigor that Hannibal comes, feeling his knot expand as Will penetrates himself in all his splendor, touching paradise.

They stay like that, embraced, Will's body trembling with each discharge inside him, thighs weakening and staying open between his hips, his cock wetting both of their abdomens without the need for direct contact. Hannibal kisses his neck, his curls, feeling the same kisses on his own skin. Careful not to stretch the union between their bodies too much, he turns them over until they're back with Will on top, moaning at the maneuver.

Hannibal caresses Will with both hands, the vertebrae of his spine. He hears his purring and heavy breathing, signs of sleep. Fatigue also calls him, but before falling asleep, he tells him affectionately and lovingly, "*I love you*, my treasure."

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Hannibal wakes up.

As has been recurring in the past few days, even in dreams, the omega haunts him. Even in moments of rest, his mind continues to torture him with ideas that could never have happened, with impossible scenarios from the beginning.

(He only remembers Will's trembling and confused body. His loneliness and desperation).

Hannibal closes his eyes and brings his hand to his eyelids, squeezing them until he sees black spots in the darkness. He feels his groin erect and can smell the desire in his own body, thinking of Will in his bed or in his wedding dress. In those horrible pants and old leather boots he wears for fishing or his neglected beard and his damn hair.

Hannibal thinks about how that morning could have been, the omega in his arms receiving his kisses, his touch, and his skin.

But he remembers how things are, what he has always sought: his possession without much effort and Will ignoring him. Unable to make eye contact.

There is no reason to feel regrets.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal was so close to breaking out of his denial, but he still needs a little push (which we'll see in the next chapter! hehehe).

I hope you had a wonderful New Year and that 2024 brings you only good things <3

Thank you for reading, commenting, and leaving kudos!

And here is the promo in my Twitter for the RT <3

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Will executes his plan and, finally, Hannibal abandons his denial.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In Hannibal's life, there is no such thing as remorse, and it has never existed. It is just another one of those useless and exhausting emotions that he has always mocked.

More than once in his games one of his prey, bound by their own vices, started babbling about guilt, incapacitating themselves and hastening their downfall.

Nevertheless, every day Hannibal wakes up telling himself that what happens inside him has no relation to those weaknesses. His desires to lock eyes with Will, to see his blue eyes turn green under the sun; to feel him in his arms again, the softness of his skin, the moisture between his thighs, the warmth of his cheeks; to appreciate his beauty, his intelligence, and that special charm; are mere physical needs after living with him for almost a year.

Because there isn't much left of the first months of apathy, of Will avoiding him with so much effort. Now they talk at night, conversations almost identical to their courtship days.

Except that Will doesn't meet his gaze directly, and the few times Hannibal has attempted to touch his hand, the omega recoils.

None of that matters. He has everything he's always wanted: his property restored, a forthcoming train station that finally values this damn town, and Will, by his side, offering a certain kind of friendship.

After inaugurating the construction of the railway, Hannibal plans to return to London, stay there for a few days. Take a break from these confusing months and regain some closeness with the betas and omegas he left behind. Because that has also been a problem. Since consummating the marriage, he hasn't had sex again, paralyzed by force in this horrible place where there is no one of interest. Frozen in recurring dreams where only his husband satisfies and tears him apart between feelings and passion.

And if every night Hannibal falls asleep thinking that what he feels has nothing to do with Mischa's accusations about how Will has been the best thing that has ever happened to him, well, that's a bothersome issue to examine.

Too complex.

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If there are annoying days, this week has been atrocious. Hannibal hasn't been able to talk to Will, who is busy with the preparations for the inauguration of the railway construction, going back and forth with Mayor Crawford, fine-tuning details.

The other horror is that tomorrow is their anniversary, and without control of his faculties, Hannibal bought the omega a gift. The last time he did something like this was during their courtship: feathers for his lures, pencils for his work. Now, an exquisite turquoise-colored silk neckerchief with calypso embroidery lies in a drawer of his desk.

He remembers stopping at the small and only omega fashion store in town, looking at the fabric in the display window. The itching in his hands and the vision of Will in that color, the possible smile upon receiving the gift, were the only things that lingered in his mind.

After buying it on impulse, self-reproach began to haunt his mind, the stupidity of giving something like that to the omega. He doesn't know which reason weighs more, the fact that Will will probably think he's mocking him, or the disappointment he himself will feel when Will rejects him.

So Hannibal keeps it and spends the entire damn inauguration thinking about their anniversary, wondering if he should make some gesture or not. He greets and receives congratulations, takes care of cutting the red ribbon where the foundations of the future railway rise, his heart tightening because it should have been Will with the scissors. But his husband looks happy among the congratulations of Mayor Crawford and other politicians, even merchants.

When they arrive at the mansion, Will's cheeks are still flushed, and the faint smile hasn't left his lips. To Hannibal’s dismay, he finds him beautiful.

(A part of him wants to see Will like this forever, to have the ability to keep him as he does on paper, with a happy face. It's that part he has learned to silence very well).

But it's not until he thinks they will separate on the stairs that Will stops him. "We need to talk. I have to go get something from my room, but I'll be back in a few seconds."

The words make his chest twist, more than usual, and he walks into the living room where he waits for the omega, sitting in silence.

"Hannibal," Will begins when he enters, a gray portfolio in his hands, a look of discomfort on his face. "When you explained your scheme to marry me, you made me understand that we could continue this charade until the business with the trains, remember?"

Hannibal nods, watching him sit in his chair.

"And today it happened," Will whispers, and for the first time in a year, his lovely blue eyes firmly meet his for a few seconds.

"I don't understand," Hannibal replies, petrified in his seat.

"I will miss this town, but not you," Will replies with certainty. "I don't want to think about you anymore, Hannibal. I don't want to see you every day or hear your voice," his words come out dry and pained.

"Will," he responds, and he feels like his voice sounds as if it's coming from someone else. Hannibal realizes that his hands are clenched so tightly that his nails are digging into his palms.

The omega stands up and hands him the folder. "I want a divorce," he asserts firmly. "I have everything ready. You can check the papers. I'm not taking anything with me, and you can keep everything. Only your signature is missing. I'll go myself tomorrow to make it official."

Hannibal feels his heartbeat in his ears, much like when he got married, when he saw Will enter dressed like an angel, like the vision of a nymph. His mouth is dry, and it's hard for him to respond. "It's ridiculous," he says finally, after an eternal pause.

But Will's eyes, as devoted as ever, as wounded as they have looked since he shattered them, are resolute. "I don't want to keep playing this game. I know you want to go back to London, to resume your life, and this is the perfect solution."

Still standing, the omega gestures towards the folder, silently asking him to read it, which Hannibal does as if in a dream. He reviews the documents and when he finishes, he nods, seeing Will sigh wearily. "Sign them, please."

His legs barely cooperate as he walks to the desk, taking a pen and marking each of the pages.

When he finishes, Will takes back the folder and, as usual, leaves him alone in the room, his footsteps growing fainter until he's gone.

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Afterwards, Hannibal languishes, seated on his divan, wine glass in hand, eyes fixed on the fire. Divorce. Will's face, as restrained as ever, as defeated as never before.

Having consummated the marriage, a necessary measure to secure his possessions, prevents it from being annulled. But a divorce will ruin Will, they both know it. With his age, his lack of roots and connections, ending his ties with an important count is a nail in the coffin.

Will knew all of this well, and yet he did it. So quickly, as if he had removed a blindfold. So prepared.

(As if that risk was preferable to staying with Hannibal. As if the damage to his reputation was just a nuisance compared to the pain).

Hannibal should be happy, his own condemnation, Will, providing an escape from this farce. He refocuses on the thoughts that have kept him steadfast all this time, telling him that he has everything he ever wanted; that he regained his lands, his firm inheritance; and that his future is vast. Getting rid of Will will open up a range of relationships that he let sleep, the beta ladies and omega gentlemen he could marry while returning to his beloved games.

He grips the glass in his hand and covers his eyes with the other, feeling them sting. Behind his eyelids, he sees Will; his gaze on him after all this time, a resolute face but filled with love.

Hannibal should not have made Will fall in love with him, let alone marry him.

Will was right, he would have sold the land in the end, everything else was unnecessary. Hannibal stops there, unable to follow that train of thought, afraid of what he will find behind that veil.

He thinks about granting Will a dowry. About Will wanting to return to his original residence in the town. Hannibal considers offering him to continue working for him; to remain in charge of his accounts and trains.

Finally, he falls asleep on the divan, lacking the energy to face reality.

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Hannibal’s body aches when he wakes up, uncomfortable from the position he spent the night in. He emerges like a ghost, only to find out that Will has gone to the community center and must already be finalizing their divorce.

He bathes and dresses with apathy, annoyed with the world, with Will. Even with Mischa, for planting so much foolishness in his head.

(He only thinks that remorse and regret are not meant for him. That he has done so much...

He refuses to entertain those thoughts).

When Will returns, his face appears at peace, as if he has truly lifted a weight off his shoulders. Hannibal follows him to his bedroom, unable to wait for him downstairs.

"You could work for me," he proposes upon entering and seeing Will sitting on his bed. And he can't help but remember the last time he was here, the coldness of his actions.

The omega's lips tighten. "God, working for you, wouldn't that look stupid?"

"You did well with the duke," he responds, annoyed.

Will rolls his eyes. "And you know that was different, he wasn't my ex-husband." He takes a deep breath, his hands on his knees. "Hannibal, I already have a plan for what I'll do. With this," he continues, pointing to the folder containing the divorce papers, "I'm ready."

Hannibal swallows hard, his heart racing and his hands sweating. He was sure Will would accept. "What will you do?"

A small smile forms on the omega's lips, showing the dimples on the corners, as beautiful as ever. "I'm going back to America," he replies.

America.

What.

And suddenly, the room feels devoid of air. Hannibal doesn't understand what's happening, what's going on with him (or perhaps he understands all *too* well). It's the original conclusion of his plan and his ultimate objective, without needing to do anything else. He nods silently, pretending to understand, of course. "Your old home."

Will shrugs and stands up, packing the folder into a suitcase, making Hannibal realize how empty the room is, everything packed up. "I think my European adventure lasted too long, longer than it was good for me."

Hannibal clasps his hands behind his back, trying to control every impulse he has been battling since he first entered the omega's office so long ago, encountering his grouchy face, his aloofness, his determination. He nods calmly and with an easy farewell, he leaves the room, descending the stairs, needing to breathe.

He doesn't know how he ends up at the stables, mounting one of his horses and riding off aimlessly, with something bursting inside him. The path he takes leads him to the forest that Will showed him, to the stones that guide to the river where Hannibal kissed him for the first time; when he cradled his face and whispered promises that he never intended to keep.

He dismounts and walks towards the riverbank, the memories flooding back, overwhelming him. The sound of the flowing water is a soothing backdrop to his chaotic thoughts. He sits down on a moss-covered rock, feeling the dampness seep through his trousers. He looks at himself in the water, observing his distressed face.

Because Hannibal has always known what's wrong with him and his situation.

Because Hannibal has chosen to remain ignorant. In denial.

Too afraid to face the impossibility of Will forgiving him: his actions were unjustifiable.

Unable to live with that truth, with the thought of losing him.

(The epiphany was when Hannibal left Will’s bedroom after consummating their marriage. Standing outside the door, paralyzed by the desire to go back in; to hold him as he should, to

kiss his mouth and love him as he has always deserved. To return his devotion.

But he heard the sound of Will’s sobs on the other side of the wood. The overwhelming scent of his shame and confusion.

He lay down with the lingering smell in his nose, with the memory of his tears.

And the next day, after looking out the window and seeing him enter that morning, Hannibal knew that Will had realized something was horribly wrong with it all. It was in the trembling of his hands, his hoarse voice. He knew that all that was left was to carry on, confess his scheming, and continue with his original objectives.

Because Will couldn't forgive his terrible wrongdoing and lies.

There are things that are irreparable, and no amount of glue in the world can mend such a shattered teacup.)

Chapter End Notes

My lovelies! I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Will saving himself is the best thing! Now we're entering the stage of "what have I done" for Hannibal, hehe. And yep, I doubt a divorce could be finalized so quickly in that era, but this is fiction and, above all, DRAMA, so let's not worry, haha.

Thank you very much for reading the story, leaving kudos, and commenting!

And here is the promo for yours RT :D

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Hannibal contemplates Will's absence and tries to overcome it in London, with absinthe, but nothing is enough. However, he makes significant decisions.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will only takes three days before leaving. Hannibal believes he spends that time making the accounts he handles available to other accountants and saying goodbye to his friend Beverly and Mayor Crawford.

In his case, Hannibal has a delicious dinner that he prepares himself, oven-baked fish with English sauce and potatoes, one of Will's favorites. But despite the enjoyable meal, the atmosphere feels tense, and Will barely speaks to him. Hannibal thinks that Will dedicated more time to saying goodbye to each of his employees than to him (and it's not like he believes himself capable of seeking the omega out, bound by so many unfamiliar emotions and overwhelming concerns that prevent him from reaching to him).

On the day Will leaves, Hannibal stays in his office, watching the carriage depart through the window and listening to the sad sighs of his staff after the omega and his dog's departure.

He spends the week locked away, only venturing out to ride his horse to the river, spending hours there, reminiscing about his outings with Will, the fishing hours in which he always failed.

Hannibal silently participates in gatherings with other esteemed alphas, responding to questions about his divorce with a mere shrug, unable to say what he planned at one point ("that's how omegas are, wretched creatures").

But everything seems lost. Hannibal lacks the will to find pleasure in anything, and walking through the estate or any other part of Townsend only weighs down his body and makes him curse. Neither the vast acres nor the future train station, not even the inheritance, are worth the absence of the company he longs for so much.

After three weeks of immense melancholy, guilt, and lovelessness, Hannibal decides to travel to London and see if he can heal by reclaiming his former life. If he can find a moment of peace where he isn't pursued by bright, affectionate blue eyes.

The journey takes him only a day, and the capital is just as cold and cloudy as ever, bustling with activity. His property on the main avenue looks just as he left it, perfectly maintained by

his employees. The first night, Hannibal indulges in a bohemian tour, consuming opium and bathing in absinthe, lying among the legs of the best that money can offer.

He wakes up in his bed with a headache and the persistent thought of how Will might be doing: if he found his old job, where and how he is living. If, perhaps, he will adopt more dogs, as it has always been his dream. Any tranquility Hannibal achieved during the night abandons him.

He can't go on like this.

Hannibal visits Bedelia Du Murier, who was the closest thing to a future wife he could have had over a decade ago. Just as cold as he is, addicted to mental games with mediocre alphas and betas, situations she has the luxury of provoking thanks to living off the inheritance she received from her deceased husband.

"At this point, I didn't expect to see you back, my dear count," the woman says, her face as beautiful as ever, with thin lips and icy eyes.

"I resolved my affairs in Townsend. It's mine again," Hannibal replies curtly and takes the opportunity to caress her cheek, kissing her mouth as they sit on the elegant red divan in the beta's apartment.

However, even though they have never had trouble maintaining their affair, Bedelia moves away from him after a few minutes, looking at him impassively, her eyes fixed on his face. "But something happened," she suggests, her perspicacity worthy of the best alienists.

"Nothing of interest."

"Enough for you to try to conceal it, Hannibal," she responds, with a hint of potential mockery in her voice. Her joy in the face of other people's weaknesses.

Hannibal tries to kiss her again, but this time, he pulls away. Without absinthe, without substances, he can't continue. He only wants Will Graham and no one else.

He separates himself and brings his head to his hands, too desperate for it to matter how he appears in front of someone like Bedelia.

But the beta looks at him with astonishment in her features. "Did the lion fall for a lamb?" she asks incredulously.

Hannibal can't do anything but tell her everything here, in the least expected place.

He confesses like he has never done before; he talks about Will, about his attraction, his longing for the omega’s closeness, his courtship, and his countless damned excuses. His denial and self-deception, his machinations and sleepless nights, his planning and blow.

Hannibal reveals the pain and the love. The suffering he witnessed, caused.

He exposes the heart he believed didn't exist because Bedelia can understand him. She's a monster like him.

When he finishes, feeling as hollow as ever, the woman simply says, "And what are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in Virginia, mourning your love?"

And Hannibal freezes because it's not an idea he hasn't considered, it's just that it's halted by the certainty that Will will never forgive him.

"But you need to ask him, not for yourself, but because you owe it to him," Bedelia responds to his contemplation, her eyes serious. "Otherwise, you will never be able to close this chapter for both of you. He needs to know."

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Although Hannital tries to move on, it seems like everything has lost its flavor, or on the contrary, it only reminds him of Will's absence, the things he could have shown and taught him. His stay in London, which was supposed to be two weeks, barely lasts seven days. He returns to Townsend as if the small town, the estate, and the entire property were his only connection to what could have made him happy, a sentence as much as a blessing.

Hannibal needs to know about Will; it's the only thing that motivates him.

But all he has is the information that Will returned to Virginia, nothing about where he will live or what he will be doing. He knows that Beverly Katz is up to date with what happened (he remembers their encounter on the street and the furious shouting he was subjected to by the young beta), but she would be the last person in the world to give him the information he needs.

That's why he finds himself sitting in Jack Crawford's office.

"I don't know what happened between you two, my lord, but I know Mr. Graham," the alpha says, judging him, "and I don't believe this divorce was his fault."

Hannibal nods, not having to feign his distress. "I made grave personal mistakes, but it is my greatest desire to be able to contact Will, to make him see my remorse."

"If Mr. Graham didn't send you his contact information, then I fail to understand why I should give it to you when it's clear that it's not what he wants," Crawford responds impassively.

"Please," Hannibal replies without shame, "I have searched for the information, but I don't know of any Graham who would lead me to Will, who I imagine must have arrived on the continent recently."

But the mayor shakes his head in denial. "I met Will when he arrived with the duke," he says, using his given name for the first time. "A quiet and moody creature, always very fair and sweet. When you started courting him, I thought he had finally found his piece of heaven, as

my wife says. I may not know what happened, but I do know that you broke his heart, my lord."

Hannibal lowers his gaze to his gift. He can't hold the mayor's gaze.

"Unless it's Mr. Graham himself who asks me to contact him, I won't fulfill your request, Count Lecter," Crawford concludes resolutely.

And Hannibal can do nothing but leave in the face of that farewell.

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Adding to his visits to the forest is the construction of the station. Although Hannibal has always known that Will put a lot of work and effort into the business, abandoning some of the historic accounts of Lancaster to fully focus on the success of that enterprise, it is not until he observes the work and notices things, from the workers' safety to the engineering plans, that he understands the omega's effort.

Hannibal understands that he forced Will to give up all of this, cornering him in a single sacrificial move.

He begins to change as the months go by. His nature prevents him from empathizing with everyone, but he decides to abandon his games, already devoid of appetite. Hannibal decides not to ruin more lives, seeing in his victims the face of Will.

He writes to Mischa, acknowledging her wisdom and asking for forgiveness. He writes: I was wrong. He writes: I love him so much that it tears me apart. He writes: I don't know how to move forward.

"*My dear brother*," says the letter he receives. "*I thought you were incapable of this evolution, a monolith filled with destructive pleasures, but I see that Mr. Graham has changed you. He loved you. I don't know if he is capable, today, of returning your affections, but he deserves to know of your atonement.*"

The same advice as Bedelia's.

But no matter how hard Hannibal tries, Mr. Crawford refuses to help him.

(It is something that comforts him, knowing that Will has people who want to protect him).

It is in his office, finishing the omega's cognac, pondering one of the many moments where he could have changed the course of his actions, that Hannibal comes up with an idea of how to convince the mayor to give him Will's contact information.

"It would be a multi million deal that you would be handing over," Crawford asserts the next day, looking at him seriously.

Hannibal shrugs. How much does Townsend property matter in the end? It's not like he will lose his mansion, which is under his family's name, and neither will he lose the profits from his title and businesses in his country and here in England.

Leasing Townsend is the ultimate sign of rejection he can show for his past actions. His original goal, his plans to achieve status, none of it was worth it after losing Will.

"Mr. Crawford," Hannibal replies honestly, "I care very little about feeling that loss if it means Will will speak to me. I understand your refusal to give me his contact information. I behaved like a fool. But from the depths of my heart, I need to be able to explain to him the change in the course of my life and his importance in it."

The mayor looks at him, almost impressed. "Are you telling me, Count Lecter, that you will abandon the state and the future profits of the station for your ex-spouse?"

"I'm telling you that none of that has value to me when my only treasure is on the other side of the world."

After a few agonizing seconds of silence, Crawford sighs, opening one of the drawers of his desk and pulling out a piece of paper. "I hope I'm not making a mistake," the alpha assures, handing him the sheet. "And I'm not doing this for the property you will be giving up, which will undoubtedly be a cost-saving, but because I see that you are truly desperate."

Hannibal nods, unable to say anything, and can only observe the information on the paper: Will Graham's postal address in Virginia.

Now all that's left is to write to him and pray to the heavens for a response.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal is changing!! It wasn't easy for him, but what did you think of his decision to let go of Townsend? Will he respond to his future letter?

I'm sure you noticed the mention of Bev! Originally, I was planning to write ficlets within this universe, and one of them was going to be the scene of their confrontation! But I'm not sure if I forgot or if laziness got the best of me. I think I'll pick up the idea again ;)

Thank you so much for the comments. I truly read them all and respond because I love hearing from you and hearing your theories and thoughts. Thank you for reading this fic, we're getting close to the end (I invite you to read my other stories too, hehe).

And here is the link for the RT in Twitter <3

Kisses!

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Hannibal sends his letter, and finally, we learn something about Will.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal spends two days trying to write the letter.

In the first draft, he laid bare his heart and used every word to express his remorse. However, it wasn't until he finished that he realized how empty it is to seek forgiveness through a letter, how cold such a course of action can be.

The second attempt focused solely on Townsend and the future of the estate and property; the decision to lease the estate to the communal council, who will be the owners of the train station, explaining that this way, the station will be a common good for all the townspeople, and he, Hannibal Lecter, will not receive the collected money. Thus, the station's profits can be invested in the town for which Will worked so hard. He also shared updates on construction and the progress made in business in recent months.

However, everything sounds too superficial and impersonal.

Now, with nerves moving his hand, Hannibal first writes a few lines trying to convey his regret, not his agony. Because if he has understood anything, it's that Will doesn't deserve to bear any of the problems he got into because of his own atrocious mistakes.

"Will," he signs, unable to call him by his last name, too painful. *"Your absence is noticeable within these walls. Mrs. Flint complains that none of the trout she cooks is as tasty as the ones you used to catch. But it's not just that; I find myself contemplating details to tell you until I remember you're not here. Worse because, to be honest, it's a situation I fell into long before you left, a situation I caused with my own hand.*

Your presence is greatly missed by everyone, especially by me."

Hannibal stops there, taking a breath and pausing for a moment. When he resumes, he writes, *"Townsend is thriving. A new fashion store and tobacco shop will be established, both eagerly awaiting the future station. And well, I think I learned something from your effort and dedication because, as of a few days ago, the communal council is the new administrator of the estate, including the trains. I know you'll be opening those giant eyes of yours and wrinkling your wise mouth, but you must understand that I don't believe I am qualified to lead this upturn. I also sincerely believe that the property I turned to you for and devised my scheme around lacks the significance I had given it in my selfishness; today, my priorities are*

different, as they should have always been. The prosperity the station will bring will be a reward for the townspeople, their earnings and all; I don't think I'm worthy of receiving that money."

The ink seems to quiver in his final words. *"I understand that you may choose not to respond, but it would be extremely pleasing to know more about you. Mayor Crawford, who holds you in very high esteem, has briefed me, but it's not the same as knowing from your own pen.*

Please."

Hannibal sends it, telling himself he expects nothing, but he knows in his heart of hearts that it's not true.

The following weeks are spent trying not to think about the letter, knowing that the distance to Virginia is enough to wait at least a month for its arrival.

A month turns into two and then three, and even the pitying look on Crawford's face when he asks if there has been a response is nothing compared to the dismay Hannibal feels at being rejected.

He also knows it's disgraceful to feel this way and that, God, he deserves it so much. But it hurts, hurts a lot, because never before has he felt such a consuming sensation as loving Will Graham.

Until it happens.

It's Jimmy who hands him the missive early in the morning. Hannibal receives it with trembling hands and locks himself in his office. He sits and contemplates it, fearful of its contents, that it might be an official version of rejection, with Will clarifying that he doesn't want to know more about him.

He opens it carefully, not wanting to tear either the envelope or the page, and the response upon reading it generates a sea of sensations as only Will Graham can cause.

"I am well. Virginia remains as rainy as ever. Winston and I found accommodation in the first week, and it seems that, in the future, I could secure the leasing of a property closer to the forest," says his omega in that messy yet elegant handwriting.

Will's words regarding the estate are straightforward: *"I didn't think there was anything more important to you than Townsend. But if it's what you consider best, I'm glad, especially considering that the good the station will bring will benefit the townspeople themselves. Change is never negative, Hannibal, and every moment can be a lesson. I won't deny my bewilderment at this announcement that even Mr. Crawford hadn't mentioned to me, but I must confess that I feel reassured knowing it will be in good hands."*

But it's the ending, his response to Hannibal's request, that gives him hope. *"Although I don't understand what could interest you in my boring days in Virginia, I can't deny that I also miss our conversations by the fire in your fireplace.*

You can send me correspondence, and I'll reply when I can."

Sure, it's not the most favorable acceptance, but it's enough for Hannibal to take out his pencil, fill it with ink, and get to work on his response.

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The letters become indispensable. Hannibal writes to Will twice a week, commenting on the property, the clients. Recounting stories from his day, sharing trivial rumors and opinions that come to his mind.

The responses are even more anticipated, playing with the time it takes to receive them, crossing an entire ocean. In Will's scattered handwriting: ink marks in the pauses, that precious poetry, that dark and perverse humor, satisfy Hannibal longing to have him close, to share his company and mere presence.

When he reads the lines and between the lines, Hannibal sighs. That innocence towards life, with his dog and with nature. Will’s visions of the people he already detests and cannot ignore in the library; his political opinions on the civil war; his thoughts on everything and nothing.

Hannibal keeps every missive. With care and respect for the paper, he places them in a trunk under his desk, fearing that moisture might wither the material.

There, he also keeps his own drawings of the omega. Will sitting in his office, glasses perched on his straight nose, furrowed brow, working. Others are of Will on the couch, a book in his hands and legs pulled up, a gentle smile on his beautiful face. Will focused on a chessboard, or with his mouth tightly closed, annoyed.

And others... those others hidden, Hannibal feels pathetic to look at them, to touch them again and again. He doesn't stop, pencil in hand, drawing the rictus of pleasure on Will's features, darkening his cheeks as a sign of a blush. The skin of his inner thighs, the warmth he well remembers from his wet groin that welcomed him with such passion.

They are his treasures. Accompanied by the precious turquoise scarf that Hannibal never tried to give him.

His correspondence extends, and Hannibal feels as if he is courting the omega again, realizing how blind he was to not want to recognize that he never felt more genuine than when he was with Will. The letters make him consider that there is still a possibility that Will sees him as more than a friend with whom to share conversations. But at the end of the day, it is impossible; Hannibal just needs to remember his scent of shame and despair; his red and tortured eyes; his omega, believing himself incapable of being loved.

How can he repair that? Simple words and acknowledgment of his worth are not adhesive.

It's painful, not as much as not hearing from him, but enough to make Hannibal melancholic: knowing that he lost his company and love forever. That he can never recover those moments.

(Stupidly, he draws a miniature portrait of Will, reminiscent of how he looked on the day of their wedding, his face when he stood before Hannibal, accepting his vows. He keeps it in a small frame that he carries in his pocket, always.

He never thought he could become so sentimental).

Life in Virginia is just as dull as it was before Will left with the duke. The money from his family jewels was enough for him to buy a ship ticket (including one for Winston) and pay for a stay in a small inn in the city center, the same place where he stayed on his first visit.

After finding a place to live and with not many expectations, Will walked to his old workplace, the library located in downtown Virginia. There, perusing the books he once organized, he encountered Director Joseph Marshall, who, just like the first time, with a pleasant and respectful smile, granted him a job interview. Even better, he reinstated him to his position.

But he still feels the void of having left what was his home for so many years.

Leaving Townsend was painful, that was the only thought he had during the weeks of the ship journey. How much he misses Hannibal (which, well, is always torture), and the farewell to Beverly. He told his friend enough, and she cried inconsolably, just as he knew would happen. Her intense brown eyes filled with fury toward the count, issuing threats to ruin his damn existence.

Will reassured her as best he could, asking her to please avoid scandals, as it would truly be the last straw in his already difficult life. Beverly tried to help him financially, but Will explained about the jewels he pawned to be able to leave town and start anew.

("But your inheritance, Will," she said, her eyes misty again. "It's your only family belongings." Will simply replied, "It's okay," pretending, as he knows so well how to do.)

Mayor Crawford, who apparently sees him as a son, writes to him regularly about the progress at the station and the arrival of new businesses. He also warns him that Count Lecter wants to contact him.

Will freezes when reading that part of the letter, sitting at his desk in the library surrounded by the books he is labeling. He stares into space, not knowing what to think, not understanding why Hannibal would want to talk to him now, after everything that has happened, and with thousands of kilometers separating them.

"Is something wrong, Mr. Graham?" Mr. Marshall asks, concern marking his elegant features. The alpha remains as kind as when Will first met him and just as friendly and gentlemanly, even with an omega like him. He always has been, for some reason he offered Will the position the first time, despite social prejudices against his dynamic, and for some reason, he took him back.

Will has always avoided looking him in the eyes, first because of the stupid infatuation he had, and now because only Hannibal consumes his thoughts. "No, nothing wrong. It's just a letter from a friend in England."

The director smiles at him with the corner of his mouth. "Internationalizing your career. I always expected great things from you, Mr. Graham. You've been an excellent worker; I imagine they must miss you eagerly."

Will can't help but blush, embarrassed by the compliments. He shakes his head, laughing softly. "I don't think so, but you must be right if there was still a job for me."

"Of course, of course, your grumpy look is the best treatment to ward off the noisy ones, much more effective than any sign," Mr. Marshall replies with a wink, bidding farewell and continuing his rounds to his office.

Will smiles, looking back at the letter. What are Hannibal's intentions? He can only sigh.

Chapter End Notes

Mr. Marshall, such a nice alpha ;)

I hope you enjoyed this chapter, marking the beginning of the arc titled "CORRESPONDENCE." One thing I love about historical romance novels is the exchange of letters, haha.

Apologies for the delay in this chapter; I intended to release it on Monday, but I've had a week with a lot of work. Ahhh, if only they paid me to read and write fics!! And I think I'll publish the second and final part of "The Virginity of Will Graham" on Sunday :D

Here is the promo for RT in Twitter <3

And as always, your comments and kudos are the best! I love reading your analyses and reactions to the story. Thank you so much!! <3

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Will in Virginia, still loving Hannibal so much. And Bev returns to speak a few truths!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Weeks later, Will receives the correspondence.

His fingers move delicately over the red seal, touching the melted wax and tracing the *H* and *L*. He leaves it on the bedside table next to his bed, the paper illuminated by the candle that threatens to go out.

Will sits on his mattress and hugs his legs, putting his head between his knees. He already knew that Hannibal planned to write to him, but now, seeing the letter here, he doesn't know if he's ready to open it and reopen so many wounds.

Winston looks at him from the foot of the bed, his eyes shining in the almost darkness. Will sighs and straightens up, pushing his bangs from his forehead, turns around, and takes the letter, opening it carefully and starting to read.

After finishing, he can't help but throw himself against the mattress, looking at the dirty ceiling, so high and distant.

Hannibal's words are as confusing as ever, full of mixed signals. Will can almost smell the affection the count feigned the first time when he courted him so eagerly. He can almost believe that he is being honest, that he really misses Will... but then he remembers getting on a carriage, and how in minutes everything went to hell, the bubble of happiness and hope bursting in his face.

Although leaving Townsend in usufruct is basically a donation to the town, it's a show of disinterest.

Will doesn't know what to think; his mind sends him to two extremes. This can only mean that Will had even less value if it was so easy for Hannibal to get rid of something he thought was so precious. Or perhaps he had more value than he believed.

It has to be the first idea. Impossible the second when the count spent two years with him: months and months of courtship, of pretending to consider making him his; and then a year of confusing expressions between wanting to be his friend while showing him how much he detested him just for existing.

No, a man like Hannibal Lecter doesn't know about remorse.

The painful epiphany arrives, and Will understands that the alpha must be bored. Surely, Will has been his favorite puppet, the closest thing to a friend that someone with Hannibal's characteristics could have. It's not that he regrets his actions, but without Will in the game, due to his own decision to regain his autonomy, Townsend is not as important.

Will puts the letter in the drawer of his bedside table, and his sobs are muffled against the pillow. It should be impossible for it to still hurt so much.

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Days turn into weeks, and Mr. Marshall sends him concerned looks that Will ignores.

He distracts himself through his correspondence with Beverly and Mr. Crawford; using his reclusive nature to scare away young people who try to kiss in the library without a chaperone; and with Winston, his most loyal companion.

He talks to Director Marshall, whom, due to Will’s shyness, barely spoke to him the first time he worked in the library. The man, a 40-year-old businessman dedicated to philanthropy, widowed over a decade ago, losing his omega to scarlet fever.

("One doesn't recover from those things," he insisted, his eyes on space, a grimace of pain on his handsome face).

But even though Will gets absorbed in these activities, every night his hands take the letter and press it against his chest, believing that he can pierce it and bury it between his ribs, where his heart begins.

He needs to close the chapter.

He needs to ignore the missive, permanently remove Hannibal from his life.

He needs to fill the void he feels from missing that damn alpha so much.

That's what it is, finally. A strong masochism that Will didn't know he had within him because he not only misses his presence but also his words, his sharp and loquacious wit. He misses making him laugh, making him angry.

"I'm a damn idiot," Will tells Winston, who looks at him with what he wants to believe is reproach, while he gets up from the bed and goes to his small desk, lighting another candle and starting to write.

It will be concise and apathetic.

But he will tell him yes, to keep their correspondence.

And although Will says it won't be regular, he becomes a liar because, being addicted to pain, after receiving more correspondence, he continues to write back, keeping Hannibal's letters in a small chest under his mattress. He laughs like an idiot at the sharp comments and becomes pensive with the arguments opposing his stance in some discussion.

Sometimes, he finds himself smiling while organizing books, as if he had returned to the courtship era.

Will stops, furrowing his brow, feeling like a fool.

But he can't help it; the letters are his obsession; the way slowly a part of his soul, still so naive, believes that Hannibal might find him interesting, might feel affection for him.

It would be asking too much for more explanations about what happened; after all, it was Will’s fault for falling into such an obvious trap.

So, Will keeps writing because the feeling of happiness he gets with each new letter sealed with *H* and *L* is incomparable to anything else.

Hannibal no longer remembers what his life was like before it revolved around the postman.

It's been months since Will left, but his presence lingers in the mansion. In fact, in his office, above the fireplace, Hannibal placed one of the portraits he painted of his beloved: smiling lips, his face imitating the gestures after surprising him with something pleasant.

In Townsend, the apparent mourning that the count is going through after his omega's divorce is also known. Perhaps the Hannibal from before, the one who died for being a fool, would have cared about his reputation. But now, the mere fact that Will writes to him as frequently as possible comforts him.

Hannibal has even gained the sympathy of those who believe that misunderstandings within their marriage caused the end.

Except for people like Miss Katz, whose hatred is known to everyone who knows them.

And although Hannibal has seen her on rare occasions since the lady shouted at him in the middle of the street, sometimes luck does not favor him, as it happens now when he encounters her in Mayor Crawford's office. He tries to avoid her as much as he can, knowing the woman's temper.

The beta always looks at him with such intense disgust that Hannibal knows if she could kill him; he would already be six feet under.

Even though Hannibal was never close to her, knowing how much she detests him can only bring to the surface his shame and the multiple mistakes he made with Will. He looks away

for the same reason, sitting in one of the seats in the area, waiting for the mayor to become available.

But when the lady leaves Crawford’s office, closing the door slowly, it seems that she cannot help but send him a biting comment. "And you still have the audacity to come here, as if any of Townsend's achievements were yours."

Hannibal doesn't answer. He doesn't want to make a scene like the last time Miss Katz confronted him. But his silence seems to fuel the beta's fury even more. "You think I don't see you, walking the streets as if you have the right to feel sad, as if you weren't filling Will's head with nonsense in your letters."

Of course, she is aware that he maintains correspondence with Will. Her darling must tell her everything. For a moment, he feels annoyed because Katz clearly hates him and must counter any positive points Will might see in him. But as she reproaches him, Hannibal has no right to feel that way.

"Miss Katz, I would prefer not to argue with you," he finally responds, getting up, while mentally thanking that Mr. Crawford has not opened his door to the voices.

But the beta shakes her head. "I never run into you to be able to argue, and this is a conversation, Count Lecter. Something we perhaps should have had years ago, when you first arrived with your courtship ideas. Wasn't it enough for you to ruin Will, take everything away from him?"

It's indefensible; he doesn't know what to say.

"You didn't even help him with a penny," the lady murmurs between her teeth, "caused Will to get rid of the only thing he had to escape from you, and now you have the audacity to be writing to him."

Hannibal looks at her with confusion, not understanding. "I offered financial help to Will, but he told me he had everything figured out."

The lady looks at him incredulously and lets out a laugh dripping with irony. "Of course, because an omega who had nowhere to fall dead, with only the clothes on his back, could afford a trip to another continent and accommodation." Her face becomes, if possible, even more enraged and distressed, "I myself offered him money, feeling horrible for pushing him to accept your courtship."

The woman seems to deflate, her tall and combative posture falling. She gives him one last deadly look before starting to walk towards the exit. Hannibal is quicker, stepping in front of her. "Miss Katz, I know how much you hate me, and I also know you won't believe a word about my remorse. But please, help me understand, where did Will get the money? What did he have to do?"

The woman's brown eyes look at him suspiciously. "All this curiosity worries me, Count Lecter. My issue with you is not because I don't believe you're sorry; I see that in every wrinkle on your face. My annoyance is that nothing you feel now changes your past actions."

Oh, he thinks, as it's him who feels himself deflate.

The lady's pretty face turns cruel. "But if you want to know so badly to continue torturing yourself, I'll tell you: Will pawned his tiny inheritance, the only keepsake from his mother. His belief in not causing complications to anyone, even to me, was so strong that he preferred to lose his few pieces of jewelry." She closes her eyes, lamenting.

Hannibal stands still, ignorant of those possessions since it's information the omega never revealed to him. His voice sounds frantic when he manages to get it out. "Where? Where did he sell them?"

"It must be too late; it was before the divorce. And I never saw them to give you a description," Miss Katz answers, giving him one last look of disdain before starting her journey again.

Hannibal waits for a few seconds, ignoring his original intention of consulting Mayor Crawford about the progress of the station, determined to leave. He needs to obtain that treasure right now.

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"The jewels of Mr. Graham, of course, I remember them," answers the old beta who works at the town's only pawnshop, his raised eyebrows moving in a sign of understanding.

Finding the jewels after so much time would be a miracle, impossible for someone as cynical as Hannibal. However, his heart beats strongly, and hope does not abandon him when he asks. "And do you still have them?"

The shop owner looks deep in thought as he takes out a notebook. "It seems that we haven't had many events with omegas in town where these jewels are used."

"Meaning?" Hannibal inquires with an intense voice.

"There isn't that much demand for that type, Count Lecter," he answers distractedly, moving his finger on a page. "Wait for me a few seconds," he says while disappearing through a door behind the store counter.

Hannibal stays still, wishing with all his might and asking anyone who might hear him, please, not to fail him. He prays to be allowed to find this part of his omega to return it to him.

The old beta returns, a smile hidden behind a bushy mustache as he carries a small chest in his hands. "You're in luck, Lord Lecter, because we hadn't sold it. However, I must tell you that its value is high."

Hannibal waves his hand nonchalantly, his body filled with relief. "Don't worry about those details. I'm willing to pay whatever you ask."

The beta looks at him attentively, placing the chest on the counter and opening it. Inside are a gold and ruby necklace and earrings, a classic design for an omega. Hannibal, gently, reaches his hand and touches them slowly, feeling his heart tighten in feelings, a sign he knows well.

The transaction is done quickly, eager to have those garments in his hands, Hannibal walks towards the mansion with the bag held between his fingers. It's not a new cup, nor is it a restored one. But it's a step to repair the destruction he caused with such ignorance and arrogance.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you like this chapter; I feel like we're in the filler episodes, haha, but it's necessary to describe the reconciliation.

Many kisses to all of you, and thanks for your kudos and comments!!

And as always, here's the link for the promo on Twitter in case you can retweet it!

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

More letters, a possible new courtship, and an unexpected reunion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal has the jewels and the handkerchief he never gave to Will.

He has the speech prepared to ask for forgiveness and declare his feelings (he's rehearsed it looking at himself in the mirror, in front of the portrait on the fireplace, and even with one of his horses).

Hannibal has the money and everything he needs to pack up his things and sail to Virginia as soon as he decides to do it.

So why the hell doesn't he?

That's what he's been asking himself for months while writing and reading Will's letters, while feeling the distance between them grow wider, while becoming addicted to the agony of feeling love.

Hannibal doesn't understand why he's such a coward, or rather, he does understand, but can't overcome the terror that seizes him at the thought of confronting Will, of having him in front of him and not knowing what to say, of all his words and eloquence slipping away.

He's been a coward for so long, since he realized that Will meant too much to him and instead of acting accordingly to that discovery, he made sure to bury it so deeply that he only ended up ruining everything.

Now Hannibal fears appearing before Will and knowing for certain that there will never be a second chance, that Will can't forgive him and even less be with him.

He knows that the right thing to do is to apologize and that's what the omega deserves. The right thing to do, but Hannibal has never done a single right thing in his life.

Mischa still can't believe he's still in Townsend. *"Just buy a ticket and embark on the journey. Mr. Graham won't wait forever for you,"* she wrote to him a few weeks ago.

And Hannibal knows it too. Every afternoon he sits in his living room drinking the whiskey that Will likes so much, looking at the portrait he hung on the fireplace, and thinking about what could have been, about how many ways he could have avoided this outcome. He's become a terrible and pathetic melancholic, if Will saw him he'd push him into the river, laughing afterwards as he watched him swim among the fish.

But it's not until Will mentions a certain Mr. Marshall that Hannibal feels his whole body tense up and his heart sink into an abyss.

His hands tremble reading the letter, a forgotten glass of red wine in his hand. Will's words drip with surprise, unable to understand why any alpha would be interested in him.

"I believe I've mentioned to you at some point about the library and my former boss, its director, Mr. Marshall. It's been he who has once again given me this job I've been telling you so much about, and well, with whom I converse every day. You know how peculiar I am with social contact. Anyway, I won't digress, Mr. Marshall has been very kind to me and a few days ago he mentioned his interest in courting me. I can see the look of disbelief you're putting on because I can see it reflected in my mirror, at my age and with my history I find it equally incredible.

But well. Mr. Crawford has told me that some Germans are interested..."

But Hannibal has stopped paying attention to the words on the page. Why the hell does he care about Mr. Crawford if Will will be courted? Worse yet, the omega didn't even explain if he accepted the proposal or not.

He gets up from his chair, pacing with heavy feet around the room, his mind torn in dozens of directions.

The right thing to do would be to send him his congratulations and how happy Hannibal is that he resumes his life in such a way. Tell him how wonderful Will is, how any alpha would be happy to call him his own.

The right thing to do.

But Hannibal has never done a single right thing in his life.

So forgetting to answer the missive and with a determined attitude, he begins to plan his next trip to America.

After all, he's ready to say what he needs.

Will doesn't know why he told Hannibal about the courtship.

His correspondences are pleasant and, honestly, the best thing that can happen to him in the week: receiving a letter from that damned count.

It's not that he's unhappy with his life, he finds it just as fulfilling as it was before he met the alpha. Peaceful and routine, only he hasn't been able to stop loving the count, and therefore, no matter how hard he tries to avoid it, his missives fill the void in his heart.

A few days ago, after finishing his work, Mr. Marshall invited him to dinner, so kindly, to a small restaurant near the library and after an almost silent conversation, he began to talk to him about his future and prosperity.

"I see in your eyes that you love someone, Mr. Graham. But you've returned to America and I imagine without success in that adventure," he said, with an affable look.

Will didn't answer, looking down, shy and embarrassed.

"I don't believe I can overcome my great love," the director continued, "but you've always fascinated me, your will and personality are rejuvenating and charming to me. I don't think it would be a bad proposal to offer you my courtship."

Will's mouth had remained open, uncomfortable and surprised. He didn't expect those words at all. With a hesitation, he had responded, "Mr. Marshall, you know of my appreciation, but I wouldn't want to offend you by saying that I have no interest in such an offer."

But the alpha hadn't been offended, shrugging and returning to his dinner. "I don't need your answer now but when you have it, I'll accept it without complaints."

So here Will is, about to turn 33, with only his dog and having to decide whether to accept another courtship proposal.

However, he knows very well what his answer will be.

No.

Will doesn't love Mr. Marshall and wouldn't want to commit just to have a place to drop dead.

Worse, he loves Hannibal too much, despite the time that has passed and despite everything he's tried to do to get over him. Will feels like it's a disease he's learned to live with: waking up and thinking of him, wondering what he's doing, falling asleep and wishing to see him once more. It hardly hurts at this point, his letters and his words and the naked affection he can read in them are a balm for his heart.

How could he accept another alpha?

Will has lived his whole life on the sidelines of what's expected of an omega, not out of rebellion but out of necessity, first for having been raised that way and then out of habit, out of fear of leaving his loneliness and having to face the truth he's always suspected: that he is undesirable.

The only courtship he wanted he accepted and came out losing, but Will doesn't regret it. For a long time, he did, wishing he had thrown the count out of his office that first day, wishing he had told Beverly no to her insistence on associating with the alpha.

But now, in his heart of hearts, he feels it was growth, painful and necessary. The love Will feels is tough and heavy but it makes him happy, pathetically happy. He couldn't regret experiencing it.

And well, Will actually does know why he told Hannibal about the courtship.

A part of him, the one that will never heal from the horrible wounds, wants to make him see that there is something worthy in him. That Will Graham is worth more than Townsend and a thousand games.

And another, another wants to know what he'll say, how he'll respond. If congratulations will come out of his ink, or if once again he'll only receive cruelty.

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To his disappointment, Hannibal doesn't write to him.

Weeks go by without any news. Will doesn't dare to ask Beverly, knowing how much his friend detests the count, so he can only remain in uncertainty, believing that perhaps telling him about the courtship was the final straw for Hannibal to get bored of him.

It was clear it would happen, the alpha had been so affectionate in his letters, fueling his fearsome game, and Will had allowed himself to be conquered once again like the idiot he has always been.

Days later he rejects Mr. Marshall with his usual clumsiness, at the end of his workday and amid the nerves of fearing losing his job.

"It's not you," he explains, mentally kicking himself for his inability to be kind, "but as I mentioned, I have no interest in a relationship."

The alpha smiles slightly, with sad, but understanding eyes. "You're quite a catch, you've always seemed like it to me. If the duke hadn't taken you a few years ago, I would have made my move back then."

Will also smiles, flattered. "Perhaps back then I would have accepted it, Mr. Marshall. But now it's very difficult."

With a keen look, the director nods. "Your heart is somewhere else and I honestly hope it's reunited with that other part."

Will feels his cheeks flush as he tightens his wallet with his hands. "Things are harder than one would like," he replies.

His rejection doesn't change things because Mr. Marshall remains as respectful as ever and it doesn't affect his work life either.

And the months go by, with Will saving up for a cheap property in Wolf Trap that he thinks he could buy in another six months if he gathers enough money. Winston is all the company he needs, but in that house, he thinks he could have all the dogs he's ever dreamed of.

And if he asks every day at the inn if there's new correspondence from a certain Hannibal Lecter, it doesn't matter, or at least he pretends not to feel disappointed when the answer is a simple negative.

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Will is walking quickly towards his home after leaving the library, watching the clouds darken more and more as a sign that it will rain, while thinking that he should open that bottle of wine that Mr. Crawford sent him a few weeks ago.

He enters and greets at the reception, being stopped by Mrs. Potts, the administrator of the establishment.

"Mr. Graham," the beta says as she guides him down the hall, her cheeks flushed and her green eyes filled with curiosity, "you didn't tell me you were expecting visitors, I would have prepared a room!"

Will looks at her confused, stopping in his tracks. "What do you mean? And where are you taking me, Mrs. Potts? I was planning on going to my room."

Mrs. Potts gestures with her hand, her gray curls moving on her head. "To the count, of course! He's waiting for you in the living room, next to the fireplace. He arrived about two hours ago and I gave him some tea and cookies. Very elegant and courteous."

He feels his eyes widen as he looks at Mrs. Potts, who looks like she's met royalty. "Count?" he asks like an idiot.

"With a very European accent. If you had told me he was coming, I would have given him a better reception," the lady adds, the wrinkles on her face making her even more affable.

But Will feels like he's dreaming awake, his body heavy and he knows his face is pale. He nods at whatever Mrs. Potts comments, walking slowly towards the living room, not knowing what to think or how to react.

Because he only knows one elegant count, with courteous demeanor and a very European accent.

The same one who is now standing, back to the door, looking at the fire in the fireplace. Hannibal looks as splendid as that day in his office when Will met him.

Will stands still, feeling simple and fatal in his black funeral suit, with his tongue tied and his mind in a thousand thoughts. How, why, for what, he had almost accepted not knowing more about the alpha, after months with his lack of correspondence.

His steps are nervous as he finally enters the room and notices how Hannibal lifts his head as if he sensed him, turning around and looking at him with an intensity that freezes him. The alpha crosses his hands behind his back, all the bearing of the aristocracy to which he has always belonged, and his voice sounds as deep as he remembers, a caress in his ears when he whispers Will.

He doesn't think he'll be able to drink Mr. Crawford's wine.

Chapter End Notes

THE MOMENT HAS ARRIVED!! Finally and thank you, Mr. Marshall, for being useful only for jealousy lol (I imagine him like Liam Neeson as Qui-Gon Jinn in Star Wars).

I hope you liked the chapter, now Will and Hannibal will finally talk face to face ;)

And as always, the link in case you can RT the promo is here. Your kudos and comments are the best!!

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

After so long, Hannibal and Will reunite, but things aren't so easy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It's his scent and the sound of his footsteps that alert Hannibal. And when he turns and sees Will Graham after so, so long, his breath leaves his mouth, chest tight and hands clenched behind his back. The desire to erase the steps that separate them, to drown his face in those curls and never let Will go again, is powerful.

But he can only whisper his name, remaining paralyzed before the immense urge to consume his vision.

Because under the light of the room, Will’s eyes seem green, his hair tousled, and on his cheeks is that beard that hardly has any thickness. His face looks surprised and worried, and Hannibal doesn't understand how he could have been so stupid, so horribly cruel to let him go, to throw it all to hell after marrying him.

The voice, when he finally finds it, comes out low but strong. "If I could see you every day, Will, I would remember this moment," he confesses.

"Hannibal," says Will, eyes on the ground, bringing a hand to his neck, "I didn't expect a visit from you. You haven't written to me."

He nods, uncomfortable. "It was a spontaneous decision to come here, Will, I found it necessary to come to you more than to send you a letter," Hannibal takes a few steps towards him. "Could we talk in a more private place?"

Will lifts his gaze, resting it on his forehead, pensive. Hannibal knows how inappropriate his request is, but he has no alternative, he needs to talk to him.

Finally, Will nods, starting to walk towards the hallway and the stairs. The silence is tense and tight when they enter his room, small but comfortable.

Will leans on his desk, crossing his arms. "Did something happen with Townsend? Because I don't understand why else you could travel here."

Hannibal swallows, seeing his fear becoming reality as he fails to invoke his eloquence, his words abandoning him. "In your letter, you mentioned a courtship," he replies, feeling out of his body as he knows he's failing to explain himself.

The brow of Will furrows, as do his lips. "Yes, I mentioned that," he adds.

"It's good news," Hannibal suggests, his hands sweating, still clasped behind his back, "But I had to come and hear from your own mouth if you accepted it, if you will accept it."

Will looks at him curiously until he seems to come to a conclusion. "Did you travel just for that?" he shakes his head, moving the curls that form his hair, "For what? Why?" he looks incredulous.

It's useless. Hannibal might as well tell the truth or something like that. "I wanted to know your decision and, if possible, meet the man who has you intoxicated."

"You're so unpleasant," responds Will, disdain in his mouth. "How awful could it be for someone to take an interest in me? Do you think so little of me?" his eyes mist over.

Hannibal is nervous, he doesn't want to keep hurting the omega but it's the only thing he seems to do. "No, Will, never," he brings a hand to his forehead, worried. Where did all his eloquence, his charisma go? "I've said everything terribly. I don't actually think it's good news, and not because you don't deserve it, God knows you deserve the world. It's just that I couldn't live with myself knowing there would be someone else in your life."

Will covers his face, wiping his eyes discreetly. "It can only be you. Well, Hannibal, here you see me, as pathetic as ever. My dog is my only company."

And it's incredible. And it's an opportunity. And Hannibal has spent months in misery, knowing for so long that Will Graham makes him happy. He looks at him, trying to let himself be seen and to throw away the mask. "You were the most infernal creature, that's what I thought that day I met you in your office. Too serious, annoying, and inappropriate, and with an awful character, thinking you were better than me, too good to accept my proposal."

Will looks at him furiously, but Hannibal persists. "I had spent half of my life thinking about what I deserved and manipulating whoever I fancied. How could a simple lonely omega destroy all my careful architecture? Because Will, nothing makes sense in my life, in the lies I've told myself since I betrayed you, in how much I long for you. I preferred to get rid of Townsend and come here, knowing full well that I don't deserve your forgiveness but unable to go on without you, separated by an ocean. Because the truth is, I need you, I love you."

The apprehension in Will's delicate features is noticeable, as is his pain. "Even here, a continent away, you come to play with me. The great Count Hannibal Lecter, are you bored with your routine? I have nothing more you could want."

"Will," Hannibal replies weakly. There are so many mistakes, so much pain, he knows that nothing he says will be enough, it's the reason, cowardly, why he hasn't tried to repair the harm caused before, because it's irreversible.

Will moves from the desk, sitting on the bed, and despite the tightness of his face, the tears continue to fall silently. "I wrote about the courtship because I wanted you to react, but I

didn't think you would come," his chin trembles along with his voic—. "What kind of humiliation have you prepared for me?"

Hannibal shakes his head, unable to resist the desire to bring his steps closer, kneeling beside Will. He wants to take his hands, but he stops. "Never again, Will. I've thought about every scenario where I avoid my mistakes, every lie I woke up to continue in denial. I thought I could overcome what I did, like so many other times, but your image haunts me as if it were a torture."

Will avoids his gaze, closing his eyes, hiding them with his hands.

"I'm so sorry. If I could change everything, I would, there's no way to prove how much I regret it," the words sound weak when Hannibal says them, so small compared to the consequences. "And I'm so selfish, I know, but I can't let you go."

Hannibal gets up and goes to the briefcase he left carelessly by the door. He takes it and returns to where Will is, kneeling again. His hands tremble as he takes out the packages. “It was dissonant, loving you so much while preaching about the falsehood of our bond. But thinking of you and making you happy like when I courted you, satisfied my appetites,” he explains, unwrapping the packaging and leaving only a black cloth that he hands to the omega.

Will watches him cautiously, receiving it gently, moving the fabric. His eyes widen upon seeing the turquoise handkerchief.

“I bought it but I didn't dare give it to you for our anniversary,” Hannibal comments, feeling incredibly pathetic and terrible. He fights against the feeling, continuing with the second package, which he hands over without a preamble.

“I don't understand,” says Will, leaving the handkerchief on his lap and opening the box that Hannibal passes to him. A surprised sigh escapes him as he sees the jewelry. “How did you know?” he whispers, his eyes misting again, but he doesn't wipe his cheeks, focused on his gifts.

“There's no way I can give back what I took from you, Will,” Hannibal asserts, hypnotized by his love, by the closeness and his vulnerability, “but I want to give you everything that's in my power.”

Will's slender fingers trace the beautiful necklace. His voice is tentative when he speaks. “You broke my heart, Hannibal,” and for the first time in so long, the omega looks him in the eyes. “You loved me and made me fall for you only to shatter everything you had built in me. I still wake up remembering your indifference, your machinations. I knew everything was wrong when I got off the carriage, that day in our wedding. I would have preferred living the lie than hearing you recount your planning.”

Hannibal bites his lip and his own tears threaten to come out. If this is the payment for every dishonor he caused, he swears never to commit such an act again. The pain is terrifying, the emptiness of defeat.

“I didn't accept the courtship,” Will continues, breaking his train of thought, “I couldn't when you're still the only thing on my mind.”

He can only swallow saliva, holding back his desires, wanting more than ever to just take Will in his arms and give him all the love Hannibal has, that he has felt from the beginning for him. Finally, he gets up, stepping back a few paces, smiling tremulously. “Can we resume our friendship?”

Will squeezes his hands, looking down, “Is that what you would want?”

Hannibal shakes his head in denial. “My wishes matter little at this point, Will. I would want to court you again, take you as my husband, and spend the rest of my days with you, but I know how impossible such a thing is,” he sighs, unable not to dream. “I settle for you accepting me back into your life.”

“I have no plans to return to Townsend,” Will replies, looking at him again. “I have my life here, it's not much, but it's mine.”

“Then I'll have to take a vacation in Virginia,” Hannibal replies, shrugging. “I have no problem adapting if it means having you closer and not waiting weeks for a response.”

Will's lips form a small and unexpected smile. “Is that it? Did you travel to another continent just to see me more often?”

Hannibal responds with excitement and seriousness, above all transparency. “I traveled because you deserved a real apology and to know how much you mean to me.”

The confession that follows is easier than he thought. “And I knew how painful it could be, because I've known how cruel I've been from the start. I didn't seek you out before because of my cowardice, and furthermore, I didn't change while we were married because I thought it would be impossible for you to forgive me, preferring to live the falsehood of our relationship, believing that you would always be by my side, despite everything I did to you.”

“Oh, Hannibal, as if that were the problem,” murmurs Will, his eyes shining. “Of course, I was hurt and upset for a long time, even more now when I thought you were coming to humiliate me again,” his voice is soft as he continues. “I forgave you, I don't know when, it might have been in your second letter, but I don't know for sure. That's not the obstacle that prevents me, after hearing you, from wanting to accept everything you offer me.”

Hannibal falls silent, inwardly aflame, trembling with emotion. “*Will*,” is all he can say, drowned in his feelings.

Bittersweet is the shape Will's mouth takes as he speaks. “Because I'm also a coward, Hannibal. I always have been. I spent my whole life avoiding social interactions because I didn't know what was expected of me and didn't want to take the risk and fail. Until I accepted you and you opened a world to me that I longed for without knowing, no, without wanting to admit that I wanted,” his eyes crinkle in an expression of anguish. “When you explained my true place in your plans, I thought I would die right there, from pain and

mortification: it was my ultimate nightmare. Now, now you tell me everything I've waited for, everything I've wanted because even after everything, I still love you.”

“But couldn't you accept it, Will, even in your mind?” Hannibal asks with emotion, hope already withered.

"The risk is too high for me, I'm not capable of facing it," his love replies firmly, voice pained. "I couldn't participate again knowing how much I could lose. What if you realize that all this time apart, you've just idealized me? What if you get bored? What if you can't deny your nature and try to play with me again?"

Hannibal wants to tell him that no, none of that is possible, that he loves Will more than anything in the world and that if he asked, he would donate every single one of his riches and throw himself at his feet. But he understands well, it's not about forgiveness, it's about trust. That's what he broke.

So he falls silent, nodding respectfully. "My failure ended up fracturing your concrete walls, the ones you erected for so long, and now they've risen like a fortress, cemented in the pain I made you feel."

Will's pale cheeks still look damp. His hands caress his returned jewelry. "I'm selfish too, Hannibal, and I want to have you in my life. Could you settle for this? Seeing me sometimes, chatting after a game of chess. Maybe fishing."

Telling him no doesn't even cross his mind. The mere proximity to his presence is a gift, just like his forgiveness, things he never thought could become real. That Will would let himself be loved as he deserves, that was impossible. So he smiles a little, as bittersweet as Will. "It is, all things considered, a triumph that I haven't rightfully earned."

A faint blush adds to Will's cheekbones, making him more precious than ever. "Will you stay in Virginia?"

"Yes, Jack Crawford has been overseeing Townsend since I handed it over, and your professional replacement, Mr. Harvest, has made good connections with the clients. I just need to find good accommodation and areas of the arts to immerse myself in this country."

Will smiles, shy and unsure. "You could come to see me after you do that. I'd like to catch up. There are several things I wanted to tell you after you stopped writing to me."

And that's how Hannibal begins his residency in the new continent.

Chapter End Notes

What did you all think? Hannibal at least knelt down twice!! And he gave Will the gifts haha.

I changed the number of chapters to 16 because apparently I can't count and had left out the last one, sorry lol. I'll upload the next one on Friday and the last one on Sunday!

Here is the link to the promo on Twitter in case you can retweet it.

Thank you very much for your comments and kudos, you're the best of the best!

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Resolutions to steer towards a happy ending, as Will analyzes himself and comes to a conclusion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Seeing Hannibal so frequently again feels unreal. It's both a dream that Will fears will collapse every day, that something will go wrong, that Hannibal will realize he doesn't actually love him, or that his life in Europe matters more than making amends for what he's done.

He hates being so insecure, even when Hannibal behaves like a cross between the alpha who courted him, and who Will now knows was real (just deeply in denial), and the being who clearly cares little for other people.

Will can read in every line of his face his love, his remorse. Because while Hannibal's letters granted Will the opportunity to peek behind the veil that makes up his aristocratic and affable personality, past actions prevented him from truly understanding the motives behind his fascination, his constant correspondence. He could sense something, some sentimentality, which he could easily brush aside when remembering his lies.

But seeing the nervous alpha, with his suitcase full of gifts, emotive eyes and pursed lips, confessing his love and pain, how could Will doubt his feelings?

It was a quick epiphany, as Hannibal spoke to him and begged for forgiveness. *He loves me*, Will thought, but it's too late. *He loves me*, but he hasn't known how to show it. *He loves me*, but I can't be with him again.

In fact, hearing his apology was just as unthinkable, the alpha too proud and narcissistic to stoop to apologizing. However, the honesty of his words and the desperation in his gaze were clear, and worse, Will still feels the same way to have denied him his already given forgiveness, and his company.

Knowing that Hannibal is truly in love changes everything and nothing. He can read his feelings in every action: when, after meeting Mr. Marshall, the Count's hands seem to tremble with the intention of touching Will's back, marking him in front of what he believed to be his rival; the possessiveness in his expression.

(Mr. Marshall smiles knowingly at Will the next day, but being a gentleman, he doesn't mention what he thinks he knows).

It's impossible under this context not to love him as always. It's impossible not to fall asleep thinking about what could have been; thinking that it would be so easy while playing chess to touch the alpha's hand, feel the pulse in his wrist and say yes to everything.

But Will doesn't.

"I'm scared," he confesses one night to Winston, who looks at him with his tongue out, sitting between his legs, "just the thought of facing rejection again paralyzes me."

His faithful dog just buries himself deeper into his lap.

The weeks pass like this, with Hannibal living in a luxury suite in the city center, a 15-minute walk from where Will resides. The alpha is quick to immerse himself in Virginia's high society, soon attending operas and those kinds of things that he's never been interested in.

He once tried to invite him, but Will froze, quickly saying no. Worse, his heart pounded when he suggested that if the Count wanted, he could join him for ice fishing.

(Hannibal looked at him with horror when he showed up, clearly preferring spring fishing, but smiling as if he too remembered the first time he accompanied him in his favorite activity).

It's painful and terrifying at the same time as it is wonderful, and Will feels so happy.

He can only think that something will go wrong. Of all the mistakes that have plagued their relationship, tortured from the start.

He can only think that Hannibal's love is clear. That the fascinated eyes of the Count have always looked like that, since he visited Will in his office.

Beverly writes to him, indignant. *"I know very well that useless waste of air is in Virginia. Will, you don't have to do anything you don't want to. He may well be regretful, but his actions have consequences, and you deserve the whole world."*

Will can't help but smile after reading the letter, his friend always passionate. His reply is quick but ambiguous, unable to tell her that he doesn't plan to resume anything because he doesn't want to have anything to do with Hannibal.

No, that's not the truth. Will actually wants to have something with Hannibal, but he's not able to accept it. And he's also not capable of openly stating that he won't get back together with his ex-husband. It's a limbo from which he doesn't know how to escape.

Meanwhile, Hannibal tells him things. He confesses his past: stories of men and women he destroyed just because. Will empathizes with all of them, but above all with the alpha, whom he loves despite what he's done, despite his inability to feel regret. Will can't help but empathize with his curiosity about what would happen, a path that only led Hannibal to feel the love he professes.

Because Will understands his own significance to the alpha: he is everything Hannibal never and always wanted. A tangle of contradictions, as sweet and as bitter as no one else. Will can

see how he surprises him every day, how being unpredictable is another thing Hannibal finds fascinating about him, like his brusque and flowery language; like his thoughts, too honest.

Hannibal invites him to dinner once a week, and more than one day after finishing work, Will finds him waiting for him on the street to accompany him home.

"You love him and want to be with him," is the no-nonsense diagnosis Beverly writes to him. *"I have to advise you that Hannibal Lecter is a monster and that, as I've told you, you deserve much more. But Will, even without telling me anything in your letters, I can read your longing. You love him and want to be with him."*

He rubs his eyes, feeling brutish and embarrassed.

That's how his heat catches him. A day before, Will manages to give his excuses to Mr. Marshall and prepare his room, which, as an omega bedroom, has soundproof protection and high-quality locks.

Will doesn't manage to tell Hannibal, though. But he leaves a note with Mrs. Potts. It's short and to the point, simply explaining that he's in his season and that when he's feeling stable, he'll look for the Count.

They are the three worst days of his life.

To the intense physical pain of just wanting to be taken; his wet and throbbing sex, longing to be completely impaled by Hannibal and remembering that one night they spent together, unable to replicate the sensations with his fingers, with his touch; the emotional anguish of not believing he's enough is added.

Because that's it in the end.

Will understands it, crying with his face against his pillow and feeling an orgasm fill him for a second until it leaves him empty and hollow.

It's that he doesn't believe he's enough, the problem now is him and not Hannibal. Will doesn't trust himself, to be able to give himself. He thinks he could ruin a second chance he hasn't taken because he's terrified.

No heat has been like this, not the ones he had before Hannibal or during their courtship, not even during his marriage, when he felt so horrible and bland. Nor the ones he's had in Virginia, so similar to the years before meeting the Count.

It's as if a part of his soul is missing. Will moans Hannibal's name, closes his eyes, and imagines him: kissing his mouth, his neck. Caressing him softly.

You love me, Will asserts in his mind, seeing behind his eyelids Hannibal, bright eyes and so much affection in his expression. *Will you still love me?* he thinks, dreaming of a future while feeling his body tear apart with need.

They are the three worst days of his life. Without a doubt.

But when he wakes up and feels like a person again and not like an animal, his mind is made up.

He won't go through another heat like this.

Will won't allow his insecurity to continue crushing him. If Hannibal behaves like a monster with him again, he'll be ready to live with the consequences.

But if there's a hint of happiness waiting, if it's possible to have what he wants, then he'll stop not taking it, even if it's in the only way he believes can work.

Will won't continue wasting time in uncertainty, but will take action of his destiny.

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Hannibal has dark circles under his eyes and his lips form a firm line as he looks at Will. "Are you alright?" he asks.

They are in the large room where the Count is staying, all the luxury that he enjoys, with the fireplace warming their seats. If Will were to close his eyes, he could almost believe they are in Townsend and everything is fine. For a moment, he thinks of replying with a question about when Hannibal started caring about his heats; he has never delved into that aspect of his life before, but he refrains. He wants to talk about something else; that's the reason he went out this afternoon, two days after finishing his season, taking advantage of Mr. Marshall granting him the entire week.

"Everything's fine, you learn to cope with the years, and I'd say I already have a routine," Will finally replies, looking at the glass of white wine in his hands. Hannibal, sitting across from him, feigns a smile, still serious, eyes on the fire.

"I find my thoughts on different lines; in the past, in the present, and in the future. And I'm terrified to think that in that last stage, you might not be there," the Count poses, as if pulling something from his chest. "I know it's unfair, knowing the weight of the consequences I carry with me, but knowing about your heat and not being able to—" he makes a face, seeming unable to continue.

Will sighs, placing his glass on the table beside him, looking at him. "My life is divided into before and after you. And despite all the predictions and advice from those who care about me, you continue to be present in it because that's my desire. When you returned, I asked you if you could settle for this, for conversations and friendship."

"And I said yes, because that's how it is. Aware of what I've done, it's enough for me that you want to keep seeing me. I'm content with your presence," Hannibal replies with vigor and sad eyes.

Will swallows, feeling his hands trembling, lowering his gaze to his lap. "And what if it were more?" his voice falters a bit, nervous. "I don't know if I could subject myself to a new courtship, or worse, a marriage."

Hannibal's thin eyebrows furrow in confusion. "I don't understand."

"An affair. I know you've had them and they are quite common," Will shrugs and lifts his gaze. "I love you and you love me, that's simple, but our story isn't. I want to be with you, I can't separate you from my life, and my longing for you is profound, it has been since you captivated me. But the terror I feel towards an even crueler outcome than what we had prevents me from being able to accept the traditional in case we embark on a romance."

"It would be unconventional," Hannibal murmurs, his face inscrutable, "and a new degradation of my part to your honor."

Will laughs without humor. "Hannibal, not even you could deny that I never had much honor; you know well the rumors about my closeness to the duke. And while I had a good status, it was merely because of what I inherited," he smiles a little, looking at the eyes he loves so much, filled with indignation for his sake. "I'm 33 years old and still as single as I've always been, there's no line of alphas waiting for me, nor will there ever be. You can see that no one raises an eyebrow when I come to see you or when you come to see me."

Hannibal stands up and walks over to him, kneeling beside him, taking his hand. "But Will, that's it. At this point, I wouldn't want to treat you as if you were a footnote, a mere affair, when you're the love of my life."

Will feels his eyes moisten and squeezes his hand. He wants so much, so many things, it has always been like this. But he learned to suppress those desires when he was little, to be realistic and more realistic, not to dream of the unattainable. He was so skilled that he convinced himself he didn't need anything or anyone and that's how he could be happy.

Now he sighs, his lips forming a smile, his other palm touching the beloved face. "Perhaps later, perhaps later you can marry me as you would like, but for now, can you give me this?"

Hannibal's chin trembles, but the kiss Will receives is warm, so similar to the first they had in the forest, under the sun. So promising. Hannibal kisses him and kisses him, releasing his hand and taking his face, pushing him back against the seat, groaning against his mouth. "Opium couldn't compare to your taste," the alpha whispers when he pulls away, his face just as loving as it has been since he arrived in Virginia. "Would you like to stay here with me today?"

And Will just nods, so eager, fearful too, but filled with courage towards what could happen. For a future where they can learn not to hurt.

Chapter End Notes

Guys, how's everyone doing!! We're just one chapter away from the end of this story, my first long translation hehe. I almost didn't make it to upload it today, thankfully I had the chapter edited a few days ago, because my work has been horrible, but I made it! So, the big finale is coming on Sunday <3

And as always, I'm sharing the link to the promo on Twitter in case you can give it a retweet!

Thank you very much to all for your kudos and comments!

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

The epilogue with a happy ending! (and smut!)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Hannibal Lecter of a decade ago wouldn't have imagined himself as someone who apologizes. That Hannibal Lecter would have been satisfied with having regained his status, with having ruined someone's life, and would have continued with his mental and carnal pleasures as if it were just another scheme.

However, that Hannibal Lecter doesn't know what it means to be well. What it feels like to be affectionate, to feel fulfilled seeing someone smile, to be the cause of that smile. That Hannibal Lecter doesn't know what it's like to be truly loved, despite mistakes, to be wanted in a way that is addictive and exquisite.

With Will trembling in his arms, his cheeks flushed along with his lips, loving eyes and an open heart, Hannibal understands that he can never go back to being the shadow he once was. He knows he could have had this long ago. Barely after he got married. If only he had apologized earlier. If only he had confessed his feelings, avoiding Will's departure.

“Don't hold back, stay with me,” Will says against Hannibal's lips, squeezing him against his body. Hannibal can only kiss his cheek, rising and helping him up, leaving his regrets behind to focus on his treasure.

He looks at him, the whirlwind of emotions he feels deepens at the sight. “You could stay in the guest room, there's no need for anything else tonight.”

Will looks at him irreverently, the redness in his cheeks evident. “We're adults, Hannibal, when I agreed to stay, it was because I thought I would be in your bed.”

Hannibal swallows with desire overwhelming him, feeling his groin hardening, aided by the words after the passionate kiss. So he nods, taking his beloved's hand and leading him to his bedroom.

It's like it's part of their everyday life, something normal, something at the end of the day; the complement they have, despite everything that has happened. They lie down gently on the bed, not letting go of each other, a reunion as delicious as it is delicate.

In their sheets, under the darkness of the night, Will looks at him with love, so noticeable in his face, in his open, red lips from their kisses. In the blue of his eyes, marked by the black of

his pupils. But beneath, behind that pure feeling, Hannibal can see the fear, the concern.

So he kisses Will, trying to convey to him that it will be different. He touches his omega with the gentleness he deserves, with the affection he needs. Hannibal feels Will's arms tightening around him and buries his mouth in his neck, breathing hotly and kissing the pale skin, murmuring Will's name, while carefully removing his clothes, until he has him naked and trembling beneath him.

His own attire disappears in desperate seconds, restless to satisfy himself, to consume his beloved and never let him go again. Will's legs wrap around him, and Hannibal knows he's unworthy of having him like this. Of this redemption. He touches the omega's thighs, the skin tingling as he feels it, Will's silent moan. He wants so much to stop and just watch him, see him naked, his beauty, his body.

But it's too soon, and the wounds haven't stopped bleeding.

Will whimper loudly when Hannibal touches his groin, masturbating his small cock, swollen and moist at the tip. His omega covers his mouth shyly, closing his eyes in embarrassment. Hannibal wants to devour him, but settles for kissing his neck, taking his hand off his face, kissing his palm, calming him. *Let go*, he whispers in his ear, feeling Will nod.

Hannibal separates a bit, unable to avoid looking at the scene their bodies form, observing everything he didn't want to see the first time. He leaves the hand that has been caressing his omega torso to take his own cock, trying to maintain his passion so as not to finish too soon.

Will's pussy is so wet; the liquid melting between trembling thighs. His prick remains erect and red in his hand, adding to the moans Will can't help but release. Hannibal doesn't know what he wants more, if bury his tongue between those wet lips or drinks from the tip of the member.

Will becomes more uncomfortable in his nakedness, despite the darkness. He tries to close his legs. "Hannibal, don't look so much, please," he pleads.

Hannibal lifts his gaze, eyes on Will's face, desperate. He sits on his haunches to kiss his forehead, his lips. He abandons the motion of his hand on Will's member to go lower, caressing the naked groin; two of his fingers penetrating the wet hole, causing an obscene sound and a sigh from his beloved.

He stops the movement on his own cock to bring Will closer to him, deep into the V that their legs form, his swollen cock kissing the lips of the open cunt. Will helps him, holding his member and stroking it with tentative fingers, while Hannibal continues fucking him with his hand, his digits exploring the hot interior of his being until he pulls them out and simply caresses those inner thighs so delicious, trembling with pleasure.

It's Will who finally moves, pushing him with his feet on Hannibal's back, penetrating himself with his cock until he has it inside him. A slow sway that Hannibal knows won't last. He has been dreaming of this moment again for so long. Of making Will his and being *his*. Of having him.

Hannibal tightens his grip, kissing his lips, feeling Will's arms wrap around his back, their bodies so tight, so full of each other. Hannibal murmurs *Will* and moans, closing his eyes, so fulfilled, so happy. Tears escape him, wanting to stay like this for eternity.

Will kisses his cheek, whining against his ear, so tight and exquisite, his hips moving faster and deeply, his voice soft as he asks for *more, please, Hannibal*.

And how could he deny him? Hannibal can only hold him tighter, love him more, devour his mouth, taking his cock and masturbating Will at the rhythm, wanting to see his omega drowned in pleasure, giving him everything he foolishly denied him. That's how he feels Will shudder, squeezing his insides, his cock, causing Hannibal to also explode, biting his omega neck with force.

They both continue trembling. Hannibal's knot extends and chokes them, his semen still spreading and filling Will, who purrs against his neck, tightening his arms around his back, hugging him lovingly.

"Oh, my treasure," Hannibal whispers hoarsely, leaving butterfly kisses on his omega's skin, "you'll never have to doubt my love again. Your worth and certainty. My sweet Will."

He listens to Will purring more intensely, feeling tears mark his neck, feeling the warmth of his body, and Hannibal promises himself to make him as happy as he can. No more wasting time like a fool and dedicating himself only to this incredible happiness.

"I love you," he says confidently, holding Will against his chest, who curls up to not disturb the connection between their bodies. "I'll wait for you for as long as necessary."

"This is enough, Hannibal," Will replies. He feels those long eyelashes against his skin and the peaceful breath that tells him his beloved is falling asleep. All he can do is accompany him, like this, together.

Townsend looks charming, and not just because today the train station connecting it to London is being inaugurated. But because it truly seems to have thrived, a boom in commerce and population.

Will can't help but feel a certain pride in the events, happy to receive congratulations from all around, with Hannibal puffing his chest beside him, never letting go of his hand.

"It's your achievement, darling," the count tells him, caressing his cheek. "None of this would have been possible if you hadn't exerted yourself so diligently."

Will can't help but blush, a gesture that hasn't left him despite the years and how much his alpha spoils him today.

He remains equally happy upon returning to the mansion, retreating to the sitting room. It's as if the time since he revealed his separation plans to the count was eternal, so distant from how happy he feels now. Here and now they are together; every day Hannibal behaves as if Will were his world, as if his vision alone were enough to satisfy his appetite.

Will loves him, and he is loved in return.

Sitting on the divan, spacious enough for both of them, Will smiles, a glass of wine in his hands, as he feels Hannibal's arm wrap around his body, embracing him. They stay like that, watching the slow burn of the wood in the fireplace, content.

"A small ceremony, very small. Just a few friends and that's it," Will breaks the silence, resuming a conversation they always have. He feels Hannibal tense, but he keeps looking straight ahead until the alpha moves his face with both hands.

"Are you accepting my proposal, Will?" he asks, voice shaking, his eyes serious and intense.

Will nods slowly, placing the glass on the table beside them. He places one of his hands on Hannibal's and brings the other to that beloved face. "You make me happy, and I want to be with you the way you want to be. I want you to fulfill every one of your promises; for us to have a family, for you to finally learn to fish and never stop furrowing your brow when I come home with a new dog."

Hannibal's chin trembles, his hands squeezing. "*Oh*, my love, of course, whatever you want. It'll be you and me, and whoever officiates the marriage if necessary," the alpha assures him and kisses his mouth with the passion of an entire summer.

It has been so painful. And slow and torturous, but Will wouldn't change what he's living for anything in the world. He wouldn't go back to the past. He doesn't regret meeting Hannibal and loving him. For the first time, he would say he is happy, that he wakes up and goes to bed feeling fulfilled. So he returns the kiss from his alpha, sighing and wishing to continue feeling this way for the rest of his days.

Chapter End Notes

And that's all she wrote! I hope you all enjoyed it! Beverly still hates Hannibal lol. And Will and Hannibal will have several children, two alphas and an omega boy, whom they love very much <3

It was a pleasure to translate this longer story, it helped me to edit the original and add some scenes during their courtship. I still have more fics to translate, especially the first one I wrote and my favorite hehe, plus I have several new oneshots and wips pending. So if you like my writing, I invite you to follow my stories, I already have more published, all hannigram, humor, angst, smut!

It was also a pleasure to read your comments and interact with you all! I hope you noticed that in the last two chapters both Will and Hannibal thought the title of the fic LOL I love it when they mention the title in a movie hahaha.

I leave you the link to the final promo of this fic, in case you can retweet it on Twitter!

End Notes

When I started translating my stories, I felt quite lazy about doing it with the longer ones. However, the warm reception from the English fandom encouraged me to share this fic with you all! It's complete, and I hope to be updating it once or twice a week.

This fic has a lot of historical inaccuracies, haha, and it's based on both the pink romantic novels I read when I was a teenager and the tearful Latin soap operas XD

I hope you enjoy it as much as the other stories I'll continue to upload! Your kudos and comments make me very happy. For anything else, you can find me on my Twitter: BattyMadison_

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!